SILAS COBB

BY

DAN. V. STEPHENS

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Silas Cobb

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A STORY
OF SUPERVISION

—BY—

DAN V. STEPHENS

FREMONT, NEBRASKA
HAMMOND BROS. & STEPHENS

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DAN V. STEPHENS
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PREFACE.

The story of "Silas Cobb" in the main is based on facts. All the characters, with one or two exceptions, are chosen from among the acquaintances of the author, and in real life played the parts assigned to them in the story. 'Tis true, the incidents are slightly embellished, and a few, even, are drawn from the imagination in order to secure the desired lessons.

While in this story "Silas Cobb" appears as he really existed, yet should you go to Brush county and ask the people what sort of a man he was, you would get a very commonplace account of him. You would find it hard to reconcile their account with this narrative. The reason for this discrepancy lies in the fact that few of us know even our most intimate friends as they really exist. If we could only draw aside the curtain and look into their hearts and see all that lies hidden there, we would realize that, in spite of many outward seeming inconsistencies, their lives were trending upward, and that many of them were really great. As it is, we only see the shell that covers them, and they seem to us to do so many strange and complex things, that we often find ourselves doubting either their sanity or their honesty. We see them with our own eyes and according to our own hearts.

So that is the reason why you would find only a commonplace account of "Silas Cobb" among the people of Brush county. The same may be said of "old Henry Boggs," who lived quietly among his neighbors without their being conscious of his nobleness of character. To them he was only "old Henry Boggs," and much like other men. It would require a great, loving, honest heart to measure the real worth of "Henry Boggs," and such a heart didn't happen to neighbor with him. But there came into his life in the course of time a sweet-faced country girl, who was great enough to measure his heart. This was "Josephine Alger," a girl you would not look at the second time in passing. Yet she was so good the people absorbed her life unconsciously. She, too, passed as a very ordinary women among her friends.

Yet the same screen that hid the virtue of "Silas Cobb," "Henry Boggs" and "Josephine Alger," also hid the vices and hypocrisy of "Professor Littleman."

The moral, however, is that heroes and heroines are always among us, if our hearts are great enough to find them. Our custom is to worship those whom some one else has found and labeled, "This is a hero." Those we possess we seldom cherish. Surrounded by heroes and heroines, we wander away to other lands to worship the labeled

idols instead of seeking out our very own at home.

While this story was told in idle moments, and by one unused to the task, it is hoped that from the incidents related many valuable lessons may be drawn by the discerning reader.

THE AUTHOR.

FREMONT, NEBR., June 1, 1901.

SILAS COBB

I.

The scenes and characters of this narrative belong to Brush county, Illinois. Should you meet one of these characters you could describe the country he came from, or if you should see the country you could form a fair estimate of the people it would produce. Both have characteristics in common. Should you take your map and try to locate Brush county you would fail, because its very ordinary name is hidden behind a ficticious one, but the country to which it belongs lies within the fork made by the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. A closer description might invite too much scrutiny, which would embarrass our characters as well as the author. The physical features of the county are rough, and the soil is not very productive. The hills are worn down to the yellow clay, and here and there is an abandoned field grown up with brush. The country roads are well worn, showing the result of almost a century's travel. The aspect of the whole region is that of well advanced maturity, if not old age.

The county seat of Brush county contains about two thousand inhabitants, and has one railroad passing through it. Some of the citizens have been heard to say that the town was not up-to-date, and this statement they attempted to prove by pointing to the fact that the Town Council had refused time and again to pass an ordinance preventing the pasturing of cows on the public common. This action of the council so chagrined that portion of the population that did not own cows, that they nick-named the town Cowville, and by that name it will henceforth be known in this narrative.

The town is very old, and has a quaint appearance. The residence houses generally stand on the edge of the street, and not upon the center of the lot to which they belong, surrounded by a spacious yard.

The old-fashioned county fairs are held each fall, in the same old buildings that were erected in anti-bellum days. The court-house bears the date of 1840 over the door, or did at the time of which this narrative treats. Even the county officers at this period had an old musty air about them. The auditor had been in office since the year before Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Everything and everybody savored of the past. To this day, should you happen to be in Cowville on county court days, you would hear the sheriff

calling the county court to order from the balcony of the ancient temple of justice. He would come out on this high forum and in a loud voice proclaim to the town: "Hear-e! Hear-e! Hear-e! The county court is now in session." A little later you will see this same functionary appear again on the balcony, or, if he doesn't feel like making his act so formal, he will simply stick his head out of the window and call the desired witness: "Hugh Leonard! Hugh Leonard! Hugh Leonard!" his voice echoing from building to building. Down on the public square, there somewhere, Hugh is waiting to be called. If the sheriff doesn't see any movement below as if Hugh were coming, he sings out to some one he knows: "Say, Jim, do you see Hugh Leonard around there?" "No!" "Well, call him then." Jim takes up the call and bellows forth Hugh Leonard's name the traditional number of times. So the customs of a people long ago dead and forgotten cling to them still.

He was universally called "The Professor."

II.

It was in this county, among these old things, that the characters of our story lived and acted their little part in life. It was back in the eighties that Mr. Littleman was elected for the third time county superintendent of schools of Brush county. Before the time of his election he was principal of the Cowville schools. He was universally called "The Professor," and since he was the only professor in the county, there was no confusion from the wrong man's answering to the title. The Professor was a man of considerable book learning, but he was unfortunate in being born with poor judgment, and a bad heart. However, this latter fact was not generally known to the people of the county, and when the Republican Convention met, the Professor was renominated without opposition. A few days later the Democratic Convention met, and in casting around for a suitable man for the place, it found itself short of material for that office, notwithstanding it was the dominant party of the county.

After much talk about the advisability of taking that office out of politics as much as possible, the convention endorsed the Professor's nomination. It might be remarked, however, incidentally, that the Professor did not poll the entire Democratic

vote, owing to an untimely remark made by one of his friends to the effect that they (the Democrats) did not have a man among them that could read or write, therefore none able to fill the office, so they were compelled to seek a candidate from among the Republicans. Strange, but it is said to be true, this remark had a cooling effect on the sensitive Democrats, and some agitated the matter to such an extent that there was talk of calling a new convention to place a candidate in the field against Professor Littleman. The only reason this was not done, was the original one, that no one could be found suitable for the position. There was one young man by the name of Silas Cobb, teaching in District No. 8, in Muddy Creek Township, said to be a Democrat, who would suit them in every particular except one—he wasn't of age. Old Henry Boggs, from Muddy Creek, brought him out, and had much to say about his sterling qualities. It was finally decided to let matters go as they were, and nothing more was said about it. Even Henry Bogg himself, the author of the idea of nominating this young man, forgot the incident, and the prospective candidate never heard of it.

The circumstance referred to, which was soon forgotten by everybody else connected with it, reached the ears of Professor Littleman, and the events that followed show how one can create an

opponent by giving his own recognition to such a possibility.

Old Henry Boggs' protege was in good standing at the county superintendent's office, and had been since he began teaching three years previously. His work had been praised by the Professor, and the patrons of his school were greatly pleased with him. No cloud had yet appeared on his horizon, and the future seemed full of promise. Each day unfolded new ideas, and new plans were laid for the improvement of his work. His education, while sufficient in principle, had been one along solid lines, and little opportunity had been afforded him for acquiring social polish. He was a country boy, plain, honest, and in a physical sense rather awkward, but yet not without prepossessing qualities.

III.

Professor Littleman, of all others, was the only man who remembered Silas Cobb as a prospective candidate for the office of county superintendent. He remembered it for a purpose. He reasoned that if he were not disposed of by the next campaign, there would be no doubt of his nomination by the Democrats, with good prospect of his election. If he could get him out of the county, there would be no one left for the Democrats to nominate, and he would have clear sailing again.

With a rather indefinite idea as to what course he should pursue, he concluded to visit Mr. Cobb's school, and perhaps something would suggest itself to him. During the fall term he drove out one morning to Muddy Creek, and called at No. 8. Mr. Cobb greeted him cordially, as was his custom, and was soon eagerly engaged in a conversation with the Professor, telling him of his work and plans. The school-room had a busy air about it, and the pupils, after giving the Superintendent a passing glance, went on with their work without paying further attention to either the Professor or teacher, who sat chatting in the rear of the room. The pupils moved about the room as necessity required, in consultation over their

work. There was a busy, interested air about the whole school.

While the Professor sat there taking note of the work of the pupils, the idea occurred to him that many people would consider that Mr. Cobb kept very poor order, and if their attention were called to it, he might lose much of his influence and reputation. When the school closed at 4 o'clock, the Professor offered a few suggestions, among them that his order might be improved somewhat.

Mr. Cobb took the suggestion seriously to heart, and began to look into the condition of his school, with a view of strengthening the weak points. He thanked the Professor for the criticism, and promised to consider the matter thoroughly. He then invited his visitor to go home with him to old Mr. Boggs', where he boarded, and spend the night. The Professor accepted the invitation, and they walked together, leading the Professor's horse, down to Mr. Boggs' home. As they neared the house, they saw old Mr. Boggs coming in from the field with a load of bright, new corn, fresh from the husks. They met at the barnyard gate, just as the old man was clubbing and yelling at some old razor-back hogs that were attempting to follow his wagon through the gate. "Howdy-do, gentlemen—plague take them hogs, anyhow—howdy Mr. Littleman, howdy

Silas. Glad t' see ye, Professor. Come right in, er go up t' the house, an' take a seat till I git the feedin' done. Mighty glad t' see ye come down. Take the Professor up, Silas, an' keep him company till I git the work done," Mr. Boggs ran on in his warm-hearted manner, scarcely giving the Professor a chance to thank him for his welcome.

The Professor didn't go up to the house. He helped old Mr. Boggs put up the horses, and talked while he worked. Mr. Cobb excused himself and went to work on his lessons for the next day. This gave the Professor a good opportunity to sound Mr. Boggs.

"Well, Professor, how did ye find the boy's school?" inquired Mr. Boggs.

"First-rate," answered the Professor promptly. "Silas is a fine boy. He's young yet, but I think, if he keeps on improving, he will be a good teacher—that is, a pretty good teacher, in time. He seems to be doing fairly well in his work. I was just wondering if you had ever heard any criticism on him—his order, for instance."

"No, I hain't," said Mr. Boggs. "He's rated high on that p'int."

"Well, now, that is just what I thought," replied the Professor, "but I am trying to think who it was that reported to me that his discipline was simply outrageous—some one at my office told

me—said his school was a bedlam, and I came out on purpose to see for myself. Now, who could that have been? Well, I can't remember now, and it doesn't matter, but I was glad to find the school was nothing like as bad as reported. Yes, Silas is a good boy, and I look for him to develop in time to doing better work. How long has he taught here, Mr. Boggs?"

"This is makin' his third year now, an' plagued ef I wouldn't like t' see the man who told ye his school wus a reg'lar bedlam."

"I am sorry I can't remember who it was, Mr. Boggs, but don't say a word about it. I wouldn't have Mr. Cobb know it, for he is sensitive and it would discourage him. Don't hurt the boy's feelings by mentioning it. The same party, whoever he was, said something about him being here too long—ought to have a change—be better for the school, or something like that. I do wish I could recall his name, but it's no use. I was just thinking if that was the case, I would see to it that Mr. Cobb got a better school elsewhere. I have a place I could recommend him to right now, in Johnson county, where he could get $10 more a month than you pay him here."

"That's mighty kind uv ye, Mr. Littleman, but when Si Cobb wants $10 more a month, he'll git it right here, an' I tell ye now, it's all a lie about him bein' here too long, an' not keepin'

order. There ain't a child in school what don't love Si Cobb. They learn as they never did afore, an' t' let Si Cobb go would raise the biggest row ye ever hearn uv. Why, there ain't a man, woman er child in this whole country about that ain't fer Si Cobb every day in the week. The man that told ye them lies can't live in these parts."

The Professor saw he had gone too far, and was likely to arouse old Mr. Boggs' suspicion, so he deftly changed the subject, after passing a compliment on the teacher, to make sure of covering up any appearance of prejudice on his part. The next day, in leaving the district, he met three other patrons of the school, all enemies to old man Boggs, but friends of the teacher. To them he told, in the same manner, what he claimed he had heard about the school. These men were not of the same honest, rugged character as Boggs, so they were impressed with the story. They had never heard of such a thing before, or even dreamed it possible; but, coming from the county superintendent, it had its effect.

IV.

On Saturday there were several patrons gathered at the Muddy Creek post-office to get their mail and do the week's trading at the general store. The story was told there to the effect that Si Cobb's school was a perfect bedlam, and some one in the district had sent for the superintendent to come out and see what could be done about it.

The next day at church there was more talk about it. The people gathered in knots discussing the matter. It was now reported that in case the school got clear beyond Silas' control, the superintendent had kindly offered to get him a school in another county, at a higher salary. One warm friend of Mr. Cobb's, who didn't know but these reports were true, declared that, "after all, that one-horse Professor is not a bad fellow. That shows he has a heart all right." So the talk ran on, and in the meantime Silas Cobb was teaching a Sunday School class of large boys in the old church, perfectly oblivious to all the comment his supposed failure was causing. Finally some one went to old Henry Boggs, who was the director of the district, and asked him about the matter. When he was told that everybody was talking about Silas' failure, the old man's wrath was a study. He fumed and swore. He declared the

people of that "deestrict must be a lot uv blankety —blank fools, ef they didn't know a little bit on their own account." Here they had a first-class school for two or three years, not a word of complaint of any kind, till one day the Professor comes out with a story about what some one should have said about the school, and the next day everybody believing it, or at least apparently not knowing enough not to believe it, when they have the evidence of a first-class school to prove it by.

That night when the teacher got home, old Henry was still fuming about the reports.

"Silas," he almost yelled, "what kind uv a school air ye keepin' up there, anyhow? What's all these reports comin' t' me about ye not keepin' order, an' bein' here too long, an' all that stuff? Plagued ef I don't make it warm fer somebody 'fore this thing's over."

Mr. Cobb was surprised, but he knew the old man well enough, having lived under his roof for three years, so he was not appalled by any means at the fierce manner in which he was greeted.

"Why, Mr. Boggs, I am not aware of anything unusual happening at the school. The work is going along very nicely; in fact, better than ever before. I was just thinking this afternoon as I walked home how splendidly every class was doing. There are my big boys and girls so inter-

ested in their work I can hardly get them to take proper exercise at recess. They want to keep at books and paper. The little fellows hunt the fields over for plants and insects, which we classify and name. We now have a large collection. The truth is they are so interested in their work that I find it very difficult to supervise all they are now doing. I can't work enough hours in the twenty-four to do all I need to do to keep those boys and girls properly provided with work. What do you see in all that, Mr. Boggs, to warrant your bad humor?"

"Well, I'll jest tell ye, Si, t' be truthful, I wus so blamed mad at the fools uv this deestrict that I mought have been a mite rough with ye, son, but it wan't because I was a-blamin' *you*. I knowed ye wus doin' right. But some half-idgit has been tellin' that ye hain't got no order in yer school, an' that ye need t' go somewhere else fer a change, an' all sich as that. Now who tells this, Lord only knows, fer I don't. That Littlehead Professor told me as how some one told him, an' the feller who told him he had fergot. Then he asked me t' say nothin' t' ye about it, as it might hurt yer feelin's, but blame me, ef he didn't peddle it around the deestrict 'fore he left, an' it's been talked by everybody fer a week, an' you an' me never knowed it. That Professor's

a snake, an' ef he don't watch out, old Henry Boggs will show him he's no fool."

After inquiry, Silas Cobb learned to his amazement that within a week's time his reputation had been greatly damaged. He could not tell from what source the blow came. He could not quite understand the Professor's attitude. It looked a little suspicious, but search as he might, he could find no motive. So he dropped the Professor out of the subject, and sought another reason for his trouble. He was to read a paper at the first meeting of the "literary," which would convene the following night. All the patrons and young people of the district attend these weekly gatherings, where an entertaining program is given. On this particular night the schoolhouse was packed. Everybody in the district, able to walk or ride, came. It was given out at school in the afternoon by Cobb that he desired a full attendance of the patrons, as he proposed to talk to them on school matters. Everybody was anxious to hear what "Mr. Silas" would have to say.

The program was carried out without any one's giving it much attention. They were too deeply interested in the speech Silas Cobb was going to make. They always felt interested when he was on the program, but to-night he was to vindicate himself of the charges made against him. The last thing on the program was Mr. Cobb's paper.

He came forward, laid his paper down on the desk, and said:

"I will substitute for my paper something more to the point. I sent out word to you this evening requesting your presence here. I wanted to talk to you about some rumors which I had just heard. I sent you word by the pupils of my school. They had heard these rumors long before I did, but not a single one of them had the heart to repeat them to me. They felt instinctively that someone was mistaken, and they did not feel like hurting my feelings by telling me of these criticisms. I have since learned how valiantly they have denounced the charge that their school was a bedlam of confusion. How such an impression could get abroad is past my understanding. It would seem that such charges would first come from the pupils. But in this case there is not a child who does not deny the truthfulness of them.

"I am told that Superintendent Littleman reported that some person had made the complaint to him. No one has been able to find that person. I would like very much to face him here to-night. I know I have no enemies in this district. I know that if any one did have a criticism to make on my school, he would come straight to me with it, and say, 'Silas, I am afraid your school is not as orderly as it might be.' I would then thank him for it, and at once examine it with a critical eye,

to find if the charge were true or imagined.

"Superintendent Littleman did visit my school. He found some good things, but I am frank to say to you that he did not praise my work very much. He suggested to me that my order might be better, and that the manners of the pupils could be improved. I thanked him for the criticism, and have since made an effort, even against my own best judgment, to follow his suggestions. There are various notions about schoolroom order. Some want the schoolroom to be as silent as the grave. It is their hobby. I am not of that class. I want my pupils to feel free and easy in their movements. I want them to do their work as quietly as need be, and I try to teach them that unnecessary noise and movement is a waste of energy. When you go into a factory, you do not stop at the threshhold and ask yourself about the noise of the establishment; you are impressed at once with the great work going on. You see every workman intent on his piece, or at least he should be, and he is working with as little or much noise as his work allows. No one is employed in there to keep order. There is a foreman who gives each man a piece of work to do, or a machine to run.

"That is the way I try to run my school. Come and see us to-morrow, and you will find each boy and girl bent on some task. If you look a little

deeper, you will find his task is pleasant. He is enjoying it very much. He knows of very little going on around him. If you should speak to him he would probably not hear you the first time. He is absorbed in what he is doing. If he makes a little noise sometimes, he is not conscious of it, nor are many of his mates, because they are busy also. When I find a boy who dislikes school, I sometimes spend weeks working with him to get him started on something he likes, or make clear to him difficult points that have made him dislike school.

"If a boy is absorbed in his work, and all at once runs on to some matter he wishes to speak about with a boy across the room, he gets up, like any gentleman would do here to-night, and walks over to the boy with whom he wishes to speak. My school works and acts just as it pleases while it works. I wish to say to you, however, that the school learned to work first, before it was allowed to act free of restraint.

"If you will come to our school, you will find us too busy to pay any attention to small noises. I hope you may never find me wasting my time listening for the traditonal pin to drop.

"You ought to be able to answer for yourselves, whether or not your children have advanced as they should while under my direction. I hope they have, and I assure you I have put forth an

honest, earnest effort to do my work in the best approved manner."

Silas sat down amid hearty applause from everybody in the house, and he had scarcely taken his seat, and the applause ceased, when a dozen patrons were trying to speak at once. Finally, the one with the loudest voice drowned out the others, and made a complimentary speech upon Mr. Cobb's work. He was followed by others, and at last a resolution endorsing his work in the strongest terms was passed, every soul voting for it.

The literary adjourned, and everybody who could get to the teacher shook his hand. He was reinstated again as the biggest man in the district by all odds, and old Henry Boggs came next.

V.

About three months after the incidents of the literary, a County Teachers' Association was held at Cowville. Under all circumstances it would have been a proper act for the county superintendent to have placed Silas Cobb on the program. He was a representative country teacher from the northwest corner of the county, and would have been better able to discuss subjects pertaining to country schools than any other teacher in the county. This was not done, however, nor was he notified, as other teachers were, of the meeting. No program had been sent him. All this occurred to Mr. Cobb as a natural thing. He did not expect to be placed on the program, nor did he want to be. He naturally thought he had been overlooked in sending out programs, or it had been sent him and lost in the mails.

The meeting was held as advertised, and Mr. Cobb was present. Every teacher there, except Silas Cobb, was called upon to express an opinion at different times during the day. There was a sharp discussion of one subject on the program, in which he participated to his credit, he thought, but the Superintendent very severely criticised every point he made, and it seemed to the teachers present not only uncalled for, but an incorrect

position on the subject. These incidents began to open Mr. Cobb's eyes to the bare fact that for some cause or other he had the ill-will of the Professor. He felt there must be a misunderstanding of some kind. As soon as he came to this conclusion, he found from his point of view there was only one other thing to do. He must go to the Professor and frankly ask him if he had erred in his conduct in any manner. When the meeting closed he walked up to the Professor and at the first opportunity he spoke to him.

"Professor, I have just been thinking to-day, that you or I, one, or probably both, were laboring under false impressions, and I know of no more satisfactory or honorable way of settling the matter than taking it up between us personally, and sifting it to the bottom. To be frank with you, I am rather surprised and hurt at the manner in which you have treated me to-day. I have overlooked many little things that I might have taken offense at, because I thought it simply an oversight, but to-day you called on every one present but me to discuss subjects at issue, until it was a conspicuous fact that I was the only one omitted. When I took occasion to debate a matter I felt I was capable of discussing, you almost insulted me with your brusque and vigorous criticism. Now what I want to know is this: Have I in any manner neglected my duty to you

or my school, or have I been unfortunate enough to offend you? Or am I unduly sensitive in regard to the manner in which I have been treated?"

The Professor was not used to a bold policy like that. He was confused and could not properly handle his words for a moment. It made him angry to think a teacher, a "country jay" at that, would dare to come up before him and question his conduct.

"No sir," he replied, "I have no knowledge of your offending me. I scarcely know you well enough or intimately enough for that. I simply didn't agree with what you said, and told you so. That is all there is to it. As to the other matters you speak of, you are entirely too sensitive. You will get over it as you grow older." With that, he turned and walked away.

Silas Cobb had at last gotten his whole-souled confidence in always being able to make matters clear as day, somewhat shattered. He stood there, for a few minutes, insulted and humiliated, and then went home. He never spoke of it to a living soul. Some would have heralded the insult abroad, and planned a bitter war against the Superintendent. If Silas Cobb had simply repeated the facts to old Henry Boggs, there would have been one of the liveliest word wars ever read about the next time the old fellow should happen to meet the Professor. Not only that, but Henry would talk

it to the neighbors, and in a week there would be such bitter hatred for the Professor, he would scarcely feel comfortable passing through that locality. Mr. Cobb knew all this, too. He understood human nature well for one so young. He was a man far in advance of his twenty years. But his idea was that such a course could do him no good in any manner, and he would simply be crippling the usefulness of the county superintendent. His idea was that no one should work at cross purposes with the man selected to lead them. He felt outraged, but kept it to himself and went on with his work.

VI.

Silas Cobb heard nothing more from the Professor till the next summer. The County Teachers' Institute was to be held at Cowville, and he was notified and requested to be present.

Unfortunately for him, or the Professor, it is hard to tell which, he was in the Professor's class in grammar. The very first recitation brought on a clash between them. The Professor called on Mr. Cobb to recite, and had apparently set a trap for him. There are many points in grammar on which even grammarians differ, and it was one of these that Mr. Cobb was called upon to discuss. He was told to sit down after he had finished. Another teacher was called and answered according to the Professor's idea.

"Correct," said the Professor. "Take note of that, Mr. Cobb; you need to brush up on these points." Mr. Cobb arose to defend his position. He was ignored, and the class work went on. Three days afterwards Mr. Cobb got up and faced the Professor after the fifth insult like the above, and said: "Sir, I am compelled to leave your class. I will not be insulted in this manner daily." With that he left the room.

Mr. Cobb had long ago concluded that it was simply a natural antipathy the Professor felt for

him, as he could find no motive for it. What could the Professor have against him, a poor country boy, while he was a man high in educational circles of the State. There was no other way to explain it, so he kept out of his presence as much as possible.

At the close of the institute an examination was held for teachers' certificates. It was a custom to renew the certificates of successful teachers, but Silas Cobb did not ask for a renewal of his. He did not care to ask for any favor, so he wrote the examination from beginning to end, paid his fee and went home.

In the course of two weeks the certificates and notices of failure were sent out. Silas Cobb received, to his great amazement, a notice of failure to pass the examination. This was something he had never dreamed of, as he felt sure he had made very high grades in all the branches. He had spent several terms on the common branches in a private normal school, and understood them well. He didn't know what to do at first, but finally decided to go to see the Superintendent on Saturday and find out on what points he had failed. In the meantime he would not tell Mr. Boggs about his trouble. On Friday night Mr. Boggs was propped up against the wall in the kitchen, reading the *Cowville Weekly*, which had just been received. Presently he snorted out in such a fury

that everybody in the room was startled. Mrs. Boggs dropped the skillet, and Silas bit the end off his lead pencil.

"Sufferin' Moses! That blankety, blank Littlehead agin!"

"Sufferin' Moses! That blankety, blank Little-head agin! Si Cobb, ye set there so peaceful, like ye didn't have a trouble in the world. Don't ye know that blankety, blank Littlefool has refused t' give ye a certif-e-kate? Jest what the idgit's got agin ye I can't ever understand, but blame me ef I don't eat him raw ef he don't give me satisfaction on this matter. Jest listen t' this, right here in the Muddy Crick News: 'It is rumored that Si Cobb won't teach Muddy Creek school next year, owing to a shortage of an official document called a teacher's certificate. This is straight from headquarters.' Bleedin' Moses! Ef I c'd git the man that put that lie in this here paper, I'd skin him alive. How is this, Silas Cobb? What do ye know about it?"

"All I know, Mr. Boggs, is that I have received a notice this very day saying I had failed to pass a satisfactory examination. I assure you I am greatly surprised and grieved about it. There must surely be a mistake. I know I could not have failed. I know *what I know*, and those questions I *did* know, and I answered them correctly. I am positive that when I call on the Superintendent, as I shall to-morrow, it will all be explained. If I am unable to get a certificate, I don't know what the others could get, as I have had more schooling than three-fourths of those teaching in the county. Everybody knows

that who knows me. It is simply a mistake. But why should that item be in the paper?"

"Yes, why?" said Mr. Boggs. "Si Cobb, ye haven't fight enough in ye fer a girl. Why don't ye brace up an' make a row over this outrage? Blamed ef I own ye ef ye don't go right down there to-morrow an' put it straight t' that chap from the shoulder. Ask him, by the bleedin' blazes, what got this item uv news in the paper here; then ask him where yer certificate is at. Jest say ye want it, an' want it quick, too. Ef ye don't git it, Si, jest take him by the nose an' pull it hard fer old Henry Boggs, an' then give it a twist fer yer own sake. Jest tell him old Henry Boggs laid the corner stone t' that old court-house twenty years afore he wus born, an' he has enough lands an' money t' prosecute him t' kingdom come fer perjurin' hisself when he swore he'd do his duty t' the people."

"A friend like you, Mr. Boggs," said Silas, "is only met with once in a lifetime. I wasn't going to tell you about this matter until I could see if I could get it adjusted, as I didn't want to worry you with it. If I should have failed, I was coming to you then for advice. I know you are always right in your judgment of the value of the actions of men. I know you feel that Superintendent Littleman has a grudge against me, and I have tried to believe you mistaken, even in the

face of many things you do not know about; but if I am unable to get a certificate, I shall be willing to openly say the Professor is unjustly prejudiced against me."

Much more was said about the matter, but nothing transpired worth noting until the next day.

VII.

Mr. Boggs and Silas drove down to Cowville to see Superintendent Littleman. While Silas went up to see the Professor, Mr. Boggs dropped in to unburden his mind to Central Committeeman John Smith, of the *Times*. He told all about the outrages on Silas Cobb, leading up to the climax of the Professor refusing to give him a certificate and having the fact printed in the weekly.

"Lets see," said Mr. Smith, reflectively, "isn't that the young man you wanted us to nominate for superintendent a year or so ago?"

"Thunderin' Moses! Ef I ain't the biggest fool in all the county. Here I've been wonderin' fer the last year what that Littlehead had agin Si Cobb. Now its all clear as day. That feller's tryin' t' kill him off so he won't have no one t' run agin next year. Blame me, ef I hadn't fergot all about that; never even told Si about it, an' he's nigh puzzled t' death t' know what that bleedin' fool has agin him. Now I mind we talked about it fer a day er two around town here, so uv course the Littlething heard of it, an' he has been the only man t' remember it. Sufferin' Peter! An' t' think I, old Henry Boggs, of all men, would fergit t' tell Si about it."

"Well, there is no doubt of the correctness of your view, Mr. Boggs; you have sized up the Professor to a dot. He even called in here once, only a short time ago, and asked me who we were going to nominate against him, and mentioned Mr. Cobb to me. Yes, you are right; he is just that short-sighted. He has probably gotten himself in an awkward place. From what I have seen and heard of that young fellow, Littleman will find more than his match in him."

Just at this point Mr. Cobb came in, looking for Mr. Boggs. Finding the two together, he greeted the editor, Mr. Smith, and excused himself for interrupting them, and was on the point of leaving, when Boggs couldn't hold in any longer and demanded to know the results of his trip to the Superintendent's office. He looked at Mr. Smith in a questioning manner, and Mr. Smith told him that he and Mr. Boggs had just been discussing his trouble, and both felt provoked that a public officer should let his prejudice rule him in such a high-handed manner.

"I called on the Professor," said Mr. Cobb, "and asked him in what I had failed. He gruffly answered 'everything.' 'Well,' I said, 'I want to see my papers; I have not failed in everything, and I want to prove to you that I have not, or I want you to satisfy me that I have. At any rate, I want to see my papers.'

"'I am sorry, sir, but I am too busy to-day to bother with it. You will have to come some time when I am not so busy.'

"'Well,' I said, 'I am busy also, and I cannot come down here again very soon, and I can look over my papers without your assistance if you will lay them out here on your desk; that is all I ask; I want to see how they are marked.'

"'You can't see them to-day; they are not here; I left them at the house, and I am not going after them.'

"'Well,' I persisted, 'give me a note to Mrs. Littleman asking her to show me my papers. I will go up there myself and go over them in her presence.'

"'I will not do it,' he answered, point blank.

"'Well, then,' I said, 'I shall try and do the best I can in the matter, and I warn you that I shall not go home to-day or to-morrow or the next day until I have settled the matter one way or the other. When I leave you this time, you and I will understand each other better than we have heretofore.'

"With that I left his office for advice. So here I am, waiting to hear what my friends will advise me to do."

Mr. Boggs was for taking the place by storm at once. He was furious at such an outrage. But Mr. Smith smiled. He knew Littleman well; knew

he was a moral coward and a man without any idea of justice.

"Wait a bit," he said, "I will speak to him."

A telephone, a new thing in that part of the world, had been placed in the court-house for the use of all the officials, and was the one conspicuous sign of progress to be seen in Cowville. When Superintendent Littleman got to the phone in answer to Mr. Smith's call, Silas Cobb and Mr. Boggs heard something like this: "Hello! Professor, is that you? Say, can you tell me whether or not Silas Cobb got a certificate?—Silas Cobb!—yes!—Oh he didn't? Well what's the matter?—Failed in all?—Well, don't you think you made a mistake?—You don't know? I should think you had, and a big one, too. Why, I know Silas Cobb has forgotten more than half the people you have licensed ever knew, and so do you. Say Professor, I am too busy to bother about this matter—you will look it up?—good, I wish you would, Professor. Look it up at once, and let me know. I want to know before I go to press. Say, Cobb is here now, he and Mr. Boggs, and when you have found the mistake send the certificate over here so they can get it before they go home—eh? All right Professor, much obliged. Good-bye."

Mr. Smith sat down and smiled. "I rather think your certificate will be here within twenty

minutes, Mr. Cobb," he said. "I hope if you are ever fortunate enough to hold a public office, you will conduct yourself in such a manner that it will never be necessary to have any one talk to you as I have just now talked to the Professor. I am inclined to think that even now, young as you are, you would not stand on any ground you could not defend against all who might come. It ought to be a humiliation to be compelled to do what it is his duty to do, but I doubt if he thinks of it in that light. It is very probable he will look at it simply as a little trick he wasn't able to turn; nothing more nor less."

Within the time set, the certificate, properly made out and signed, was delivered at the *Times* office by a boy, and word sent by the Professor that a mistake had been made by substituting a girl's grade named Cobbson for Mr. Cobb's, and he had just found the error. He hoped Mr. Cobb would overlook the matter, mistakes would occur, etc.

Up to this time Silas Cobb knew nothing of the motive that guided the Professor in all his petty actions in relation to himself; but that night when old Mr. Boggs unburdened his mind of all he remembered of the incident when he had proposed his name for county superintendent, he was perfectly satisfied that the Professor had made a foolish attempt to sacrifice him. This is a clear case

of creating a candidate for office where none really existed, by simply trying to kill off an imaginary one. Old Henry Boggs had forgotten the incident entirely, and never would have recalled it again, and Silas Cobb not only never heard it, but would not have thought of aspiring to the office. The Professor simply forced the idea upon them, and they were not long in developing quite an ambition in that line. But after much ambitious talk it was considered out of the range of possibilities. He was only twenty years old, and had never taught school outside of the country district of No. 8, and the idea of electing him would be laughed at, so Silas declared, and, after much protest, the old man agreed to it, and the subject was wiped off their political slate.

VIII.

Everything moved on as usual in educational lines, nothing being done except to plod along, as the work had plodded for twenty years. No new or advanced steps were taken to keep the county up with the educational progress going on in the outside world.

The Professor went up to Springfield each winter to attend the State Teachers' Association. There he heard all the up-to-date ideas discussed, and would often combat them. He would sit around as useless as a wart on a log, and never seemed in favor of anything that wasn't established before he was born. Nothing new seemed to get nourishment in his mind. That winter Silas Cobb went to the State Association for the first time. It was a great revelation to him. He knew no one there, but he went from section to section, listening to papers read, and to the discussions.

By accident he came into the county superintendent's section. He saw his mistake, and was about to leave when his attention was directed to the speaker, a tall, smooth-faced young man, whom he afterwards learned was a neighboring superintendent. The speaker was talking on the subject of "Course of Study and Classification of

the Country Schools." He became so interested in what he was saying he sat down, and listened carefully to the end. He had never heard of anything more sensible or practical, and he was just wondering why it was that Brush county had not taken steps in that line, when the Professor arose from his seat and made a rambling harangue against the whole idea. It was absurd to attempt grading the country schools. He was surprised that his worthy colleague should waste his time on such useless work. "You could never get a course of study to work satisfactorily under such conditions." "Did you ever try it?" called out Superintendent Smith, who made the former speech.

"Well, no;" replied Mr. Littleman, "but I am sure it would not work."

"Well, it does work," replied Mr. Smith. "We have our schools, every one of them, following a course of study, and have been for two years. We know by experience what can be done, and all I have said is based on actual work. It has always seemed rather singular to me that those who have never tried to do anything, are the first to come here and throw the weight of their ignorance against those who have tried to take a step forward."

It was very apparent that a lively debate would be precipitated on account of Mr. Smith's vigor-

ous words of reproof to the non-progressive men of the convention. There were others there like the Professor, who took the paths their fathers had beaten out, and were ready to denounce as faddists those who attempted to improve the road.

Superintendent Blockhead, from Kickapoo county, was on his feet in an instant, and declared "There are others here besides Superintendent Littleman who do not chase after every will-o'-the-wisp that appears on the scene; men who have some stability of purpose, and do not despise the methods of their fathers because they happen to be old. There are too many fads and faddists in this State for the State's good. We ought to think before we act. Superintendent Smith is a little young yet, but when he has served his people as long as I have, he will not be so ready to denounce old things. He will know more and say less about the weight of ignorance being against progress."

Superintendent Smith was on his feet in an instant. He knew a great many things about Superintendent Blockhead's methods, and since the matter had become so personal, he meant to use them. He was ready for anything.

"I did not mean to make personal remarks in this debate. I simply used the word ignorance in the sense of not being experienced in a certain subject, the one under discussion. You gentle-

men have declared gradation of country schools impossible. I asked, 'Have you tried it?' You answer, 'No.' I then declare I have tried it for two years with splendid results. I know what I am talking about on this subject. You admit you don't. I say you throw the weight of your ignorance against progress. You tell me I am young; I haven't served my county long enough to know as much as you do. I admit it, but I have learned in the few years I have served my people, that classification and gradation is a fact, not a theory only. You have served your people, Superintendent Blockhead, sixteen years, and you have made no test of these matters, but you come here and use your long years of experiene as a block to check the progress of others. To my personal knowledge, your principal occupation during all these years has been to hold examinations and visit the schools once a year; that is all you have believed in. It may have been because it was the easiest way to fill the place you were elected to four times in succession. You hold one teachers' meeting annually, when you ought to hold one a month; you spend more time each month visiting with farmers and politicians than you do attending to school matters. I say this for the benefit of the new superintendents present, who might, on account of your long experience, be led to believe that what you say is true. I want them to know that I live across the

county line from you, and that I know you to be a man who loves his ease; who wouldn't under-

"Superintendent Smith was on his feet in an instant."

take anything that calls for an extra effort. You place your portly frame and air of experience in the road of progress in order to keep your neighbors from advancing. It might be proof that you were out of date. I want the superintendents present to know that your ideas and mine are as

wide apart as are the cardinal points, and that while you have a crude notion that classification and gradation are impossible, I have a full-fledged example of its possibility in operation in my county. Now, Mr. Blockhead, I have finished, and I ask your pardon if my necessarily plain language has offended you."

He sat down, and not a man said a word. Superintendent Blockhead had received a mortal blow. He was the greatest fake in the State; did less and got credit for more than any of his unworthy competitors in that line. He didn't want his history aired any further, so he kept still. He knew Mr. Smith quite well, and was afraid of him. He might possibly be led in another speech to tell about the teachers he licensed, and how they swarmed over the line into Smith's county like the traditional locust, with their ignorance and inexperience, driving experienced and competent teachers before them from the field.

Silas Cobb sat there taking in this discussion with the keenest interest. When the meeting adjourned, he went up to Superintendent Smith and introduced himself; asked about his course of study and work in general, learned all he could about grading schools, and got a copy of his course of study. When he went home he began to organize his school to fit into the regular prescribed work of the course, and before the winter

was over he wrote Superintendent Smith, thanking him for the assistance he had given him, and told him of his success in thoroughly organizing his school according to the course.

IX.

The year for electing county officers was half spent before much had been said about the matter. Silas Cobb had put the whole subject out of his mind, and had never even considered it possible to ever reach the office of county superintendent. Old Henry Boggs had also given up the idea, but with reluctance.

Along in July, Mr. Boggs received a notice from Central Committeeman Smith, editor of the *Times*, requesting his presence at a meeting of the county committee, of which Mr. Boggs was a member.

Mr. Boggs drove into Cowville on the appointed day, and met a dozen other Democrats, who had congregated for the same purpose. After fixing the dates for the county convention and primaries, they mapped out the most favorable course for the convention, even selecting the most desirable men to be presented for nomination. When they got down to the "tail end" of the ticket, the office of superintendent was taken up. No one had a candidate for the place, nor one to recommend.

All agreed that Professor Littleman should be opposed by some one, but who?—that was the burning question.

At this point everybody present received a shock by old man Boggs snorting out:

"Bleedin' sufferin' Moses! ef I didn't jest about fergit Si Cobb agin. Why, Silas Cobb's jest the man. I told ye about him four years ago. Ye mind he wus too young. Blame me, ef I don't believe I'm losin' uv my mind. That boy is jest now twenty-three years old, an' he's the most sensible chap ye ever seed. I tell ye no man can beat him makin' friends. He'll git all the votes in Muddy Crick township but two. He's the best teacher we ever had, an' I recommend him t' yer consideration. Old Henry Boggs ain't a-speakin' fer them that's not right, gentlemen, an' ef ye ever have any complaint agin Si Cobb, I'll answer fer him myself."

There was nothing for the committee to do but to either favor Mr. Cobb's nomination or leave the place vacant on the ticket. There was not another Democratic teacher in the county available. But aside from the fact that there was no one to nominate, there were many who thought Mr. Cobb would make a good officer, and there were others who did not know him, but who believed in the judgment of old Henry Boggs. However, nothing further could be done until the convention met.

That evening old Mr. Boggs drove home with a light heart. Next to Mrs. Boggs, he loved Silas

Cobb the best of anything on earth, even better than his big fat horses, and that was saying a great deal.

"That evening old Mr. Boggs drove home with a light heart."

When he came in sight down the road, Silas was sitting on the front porch reading the last issue of the *Times*. The old man's face and form showed

through the clouds of white dust, stirred up by his elephant-like horses, not unlike an Australian bushman. Sitting in the middle of the seat, straight as an arrow, hairy as an ape, with both arms outstretched, pulling on the lines as though he were making a "2:40 gait," he came on, the outfit producing an effect much like that of a big snow plow or road grader.

Silas knew something very pleasing had happened to the old gentleman, or else he had done something of importance in some form or other. It aroused his curiosity to such an extent that he got up and went down to open the big gate and club away the old razor-back sows and pigs so Mr. Boggs could get into the barn-yard. He came on, and thundered through the gate with a clatter and a bang, storming at the razor-backs from one side to the other as he went in. He pulled up inside with a "Whoa!" "Ain't them pretty horses, though, Si? I tell ye there's no better team on the hull crick than them. But who keers fer horses? Si, I've got sumthin' so good t' tell ye, that ye'll jest about have fits when I do blurt it out once. Do ye know what old Boggs has did, young man? He's jest about as good as got ye nominated fer superintendent."

"You surely can't mean it, can you, Mr. Boggs?" replied Silas, his face full of excitement.

"Plagued ef I don't, even ef I did jest come

the nighest in the world uv fergittin' ye, Silas. Well sir, Si, ye jest ought t' have seed the old man pawin' the air makin' his speech. I come so dad burned near fergittin' about ever havin' mentioned ye afore, that my language mought not have been so fluent as it would a been ef I had had time t' prepare my speech. Ye see, it come t' me like this: We couldn't think uv anyone t' put agin the Professor, an' some 'lowed it would be mighty bad fer that cuss not t' have an erponent, an' jest then I thought uv how he thought he had an erponent in ye, Si. Well, Si, I jest jumped up, an' bein' big, and havin' a big mouth, an' bein' kinder black lookin' in these whiskers, I guess I took them delegates by storm. No use fer me t' try t' tell ye uv my speech, Silas, but suffer it t' say, I got all them Democrats t' agree that ye wus the right man fer the place, an' I believe ye'll git the nomination by acclimazation. Bleedin' Moses! but I did storm at 'em in that speech! Smith after'ard told me I did mighty well presentin' yer case."

Silas walked up and took the old man by the hand, and though Mr. Boggs stood six feet tall, and had a big, brawny hand, Silas stood within an inch of his height, and when his strong, muscular hand closed down on the old man's with a hearty grip of gratitude, the old fellow winced a little.

"Mr. Boggs," said Silas, "you have my grati-

tude forever. No matter what comes to me in the future, I shall always remember you as a father to

"But I did storm at 'em in that speech."

me. You seem never to cease thinking of my interest, and I shall always remember your kindness."

After the excitement of the day, this was too much for the old gentleman. When he felt this

big, hearty boy grasp his hand, and heard his words of praise, a few tears trickled down his wrinkled cheeks, for which he was ashamed, and in order to hide his embarrassment, he heaved a piece of board at a razor-back, and stormed into a flock of chickens that had invaded the corn crib near by, much to their confusion, scattering them cackling in every direction.

X.

A few weeks later the primaries were held, and Muddy Creek township selected an enthusiastic delegation, instructed to do all in their power to secure the nomination of Silas Cobb. Up to the day Mr. Boggs came home with the good news that such a thing as his nomination was possible, he had never thought of himself in that light. In all his twenty-two years of life he had never pictured himself in the capacity of county superintendent. Many times he had elected himself to Congress, to be governor, and even once or twice he reached the presidency of the Republic. Had it been any of these positions he was being considered for, there would have been little new thought for him, as he had gone through all these details so far as his limited view reached, and he would have at once known what to do or say.

But this, of all positions to which he might have justly aspired, he had sadly neglected to think about or study at all. From the day Mr. Boggs brought the news home, he had given himself up to a full consideration of the subject from all sides. When the convention met he had some idea of a superintendent's duties.

It happened, by accident, that both the Democratic and Republican conventions met at Cow-

ville on the same day. Mr. Cobb and old man Boggs went down with the Muddy Creek delegation. On the way they were joined by another delegation from a neighboring township. These men were at once informed of Mr. Cobb's candidacy, and readily agreed to support him. It was apparent from the start that Muddy Creek's candidate would be selected by the convention. There were too many democratic votes up there to be overlooked.

As usual, all the candidates for the other offices were selected first, and, there being no interest then in the different delegations, the candidates gave their support to Mr. Cobb in order to satisfy his "stronghold."

Cobb was nominated and called out for a speech. He was young and green, and having never appeared before an audience outside of the evening literary society and spelling schools held in his district, he was greatly confused and in doubt as to what he should say. To make matters worse, he saw Professor Littleman in the audience, grinning and smirking at him in a condescending manner. He had heard the Professor talk in a say-nothing manner many times, but he, at least, could talk without embarrassment, and such an accomplishment, at such a moment, seemed to Silas to mean success in his coming canvass. His speech to the convention was a nightmare, not

only to himself, but to the convention also. He stumbled, stammered, blushed and trembled for the space of probably a half minute, on the judge's stand, and then left it, humiliated to the dust. The convention was made up of good-hearted men, and they seemed to understand instinctively that he was a good fellow, and he looked intelligent, so they applauded his poor, embarrassed speech as much as that of any other candidate.

Professor Littleman, who had been nominated by the Republicans, turned to his friend who had come in from the Republican convention, and said, with a sneer: "Pretty thing for a man of my long experience and education to be pitted against, isn't it? The very idea is absurd. They surely don't expect to elect such a green fellow as that. They have just put him up to defeat him. I dare say half these men here fully expect to vote for me, and just put this boy up in order to make my election sure. The boy will be wiser in a month or so." His friend assured him that there was no doubt of his statements being absolutely correct.

They left the court-house together, and went down in front where a party of Republicans were chatting over the possibilities of the election, while they were waiting for news from their Democratic brothers upstairs. Professor Littleman and his friend were greeted warmly by them, and many jokes were sprung on the young man who

had just made an ass of himself upstairs. The Professor said: "Gentlemen, you missed half your life in not hearing Si Cobb's speech accepting the nomination. It was full of wit, wisdom and oratory. It beats anything ever heard in Brush county court-house. It was simply a literary masterpiece. Come to think of it, though, I am very glad you didn't hear it, for if you had, it would surely have won some of you over to his side." Some of the party had heard Cobb's effort, and had just finished telling of his humiliation, when the Professor appeared on the scene and made his satirical speech. The crowd greeted his sally with loud laughter, and many idiotic remarks were made at the expense of Si Cobb.

In a few minutes the crowd came pouring down the old rickety stairs from the court-room, and began to disperse. Along with the last of the delegates came Mr. Cobb. He had a good, honest look in his face. He came straight up to the Professor as soon as he saw him, and greeted him very cordially. "How do you do, Professor? I am very glad to meet you, and congratulate you on your renomination. While I cannot wish you success in your coming canvass, on account of my personal interest in it, yet I hope we shall have a friendly contest, and whoever wins, will do so as a gentleman."

This greeting was so open and friendly, that

the manner of it, more than the words, had a very pleasing effect on all those present.

The Professor looked both pleased and ashamed. He saw before him a face young and full of frankness, and free from all shams and intrigue. The crowd that looked on also felt abashed, and just a little ashamed of the tone and manner they and the Professor had employed against Mr. Cobb. They did not expect him to come in among them to congratulate his opponent. That was unlooked for even by the Professor, so he stood there scarcely knowing how to answer the young man. Mr. Cobb was looking steadily up in his face, which made it harder still for him to answer him.

Finally the Professor managed to answer him in a sort of a sheepish manner, and as an excuse to get away, said: "Excuse me, please, there's Mr. Brown, whom I wish to see before he leaves town," and with that he hurried off. Mr. Cobb then greeted the men he knew, and was introduced to others, and before he knew it he was holding quite an informal reception on the court-house steps.

Later, as he was leaving, one man remarked to a party of friends: "He may not be able to make a speech on the judge's stand, before a convention, but I tell you one thing he can do. He can take you by the hand and look you straight in the eye, and somehow or other you believe in him.

He has more common sense and good manners in a minute than that one-horse, vulgar Professor, who has been publicly insulting him, ever read about. For my part I shall vote for Silas Cobb, though I sat as a delegate in the Republican convention that nominated the Professor. I take it that a school superintendent ought to be an example of good manners, and honesty. The Professor showed us here that he had neither good manners nor an honest heart.

Several nodded assent to this, but political lines were drawn too closely for the timid to express themselves, so nothing further was said, and the day closed with Silas Cobb and Professor Littleman pitted against each other in a political race for the office of county superintendent of schools.

That night, as Silas Cobb and old Henry Boggs drove home together, they discussed the events of the day. While Mr. Cobb was feeling contented with the results, as a whole, he felt rather blue over his failure to make an intelligent speech.

"Shucks, Si! What's a speech! Now, there's old Gibson, uv our deestrict, who makes the biggest speech at our annual meetin', an' he's alus spoutin' at the literary an' spellin' schools. He's alus presidin' an' speechifyin' at the Fourth uv July celebration, funerals, an' prayer meetin's. But who keers fer old Gibson? Everybody says

he's windy, an' don't count fer much, nohow. Now, look at Sam Street. He can't make a speech afore the deestrict meetin' t' save his life, but he is so all-powerful in his influence that he jest about runs the deestrict. I tell ye, Si, it's not all in speech-makin'. Ye teach the best school uv any man in this here county, t' my notions, an' I wouldn't keer ef ye couldn't say 'Jack Robinson' in a public meetin'. It wus only because ye wus rattled, Si. I've hearn ye make as fine speeches at our literary as any man ever made, an' I'm sure ye'll be all right on that when ye git cooled off."

Good-hearted Mr. Boggs ran on like this, trying to make Silas feel better over his failure, until they drove up in the barn-yard, and were greeted with a dozen questions in a string by Mrs. Boggs wanting to know if Mr. Si was nominated.

"Hold on, mother," said Mr. Boggs, as Mrs. Boggs ran on, "now jest wait till I tell ye Si was nominated. When Sam Street an' me told them town fellers that this township demanded a representin' on the ticket, they jest put on Mr. Silas Cobb without any more kickin'. They know no ticket can pull through without the full vote uv Muddy Crick township, so ye see, me an' Sam can git about what we ask fer."

"I am glad you feel so good over my success, Mrs. Boggs," said Silas. "I owe it all to your good old hubsand, who has a heart so big and

honest that he has completely swallowed me up in it. I could not have done a thing there without him. He has just taken me under his wing, and fought his way along with me. I am even a dead load to him, because, instead of helping, I made a miserable, pitiable effort to make a speech to-day, thanking the convention, and instead of doing us both credit, I made the audience feel ashamed of me. I don't know whether I shall ever live it down or not. They will surely think me unfit for the office, and I even fear, myself, I am not over fit for it."

XI.

Most people admit that it does not pay to abuse your opponent in a political canvass, but few practice it. It is so easy to drift into criticism that only a few men resist the temptation. In that part of Illinois it was customary to hold early conventions, and make a long canvass. The candidates usually aimed to call on most of the voters of the county. Professor Littleman and Silas Cobb were not exceptions to this rule. They started out soon after the conventions nominated them. Their methods of canvassing were as different as the two men. They could not do other than they did. Each followed his own bent. The Professor knew everybody, and he greeted them with a "Hello, John," "How are you, Jim? Glad to see you. How's the corn turning out? 'Bout done husking? Seen the kid yet Si Cobb—my opponent? No? Say, isn't that a great note, putting up that boy against me? Why didn't they nominate a man with some education, if they must nominate any one? The idea of putting up that green, ignorant boy is absurd. He can scarcely get a certificate, and between you and me —don't want you to mention it—he had quite a little trouble to get through at all this year. I had to consider the matter a second time, and

strain a point to let him in. In fact, I wouldn't have let him pass at all, but I knew he was to be my opponent, and people might say I was prejudiced against him."

That was the Professor's style of canvass. He changed it now and then to break the monotony, but he always expressed the same thing. That was his nature. He couldn't act otherwise, and be true to himself.

Silas Cobb followed his inclinations. He had never made a canvass. He knew nothing about it. He followed the Professor, and greeted the people like this: "How do you do, sir? I believe you are Mr. Brown? My name is Silas Cobb. I am the Democratic nominee for county superintendent. I am going over the county, making the acquaintance of the people, and giving them a chance to see me, so they will be better able to pass judgment on me at the polls. As a rule, we form a fair idea of men by meeting and conversing with them. My opponent is a man of much experience. I have very little, and I am sure, if I stand any show of being elected at all, I must, at least, let the people see that I am a full-grown man. There isn't any use for me to tell you of my aims, should I be elected. It is hard to tell just what I should do, until I have more information at hand as to what ought to be done. For fear you might be mislead as to my qualifications,

I wish you to look at my Normal school diploma, showing me a graduate from the Teachers' course, and first grade county certificate, issued me by Professor Littleman. You will notice he gives me very high markings. These papers ought to settle the matter of educational qualifications. You will have to use your own judgment as to whether you think I am endowed with enough common sense to properly conduct a public office. So far as I can see, the last requirement mentioned is of greater importance than the first. A man could run the office with common sense alone, but he couldn't run it without common sense if he knew the contents of all the books. Now, Mr. Brown, I leave the matter with you. Good-by," and with a hearty, honest shake of the hand, he went on to the next man.

That was Silas Cobb's plan of canvass. It was just like him. He followed his own bent. Each man he left admired his manly, honest ways. They enjoyed looking into his open countenance. They noticed no envy or hatred of his opponent. Each man remembered as he looked at his splendid standings shown on his certificate, that the Professor had said he let him pass on a pinch. They contrasted his dignity with the Professor's familiar, vulgar criticism. They did not see anything green looking about him. He looked even brighter than the Professor. He didn't look like a kid either.

He stood 5 feet, 11 inches. The Professor was full three inches shorter.

Long before the election day came around, there were many events that caused Silas Cobb's hope to rise. To many it seemed certain that his election was already assured.

At last the election was held and the votes were counted. It was a great victory for Silas Cobb. He carried every township in the county. It seemed that almost every man whom he had met and shaken hands with had cast his vote for him, so wonderful was his influence over those with whom he came in contact.

Professor Littleman raved about his defeat. Said the people had gone crazy. Didn't know a good thing when they saw it, and many other uncomplimentary things.

Silas Cobb was delighted with his success. It meant a great deal to him. It placed him high above his former position, and set him ten years ahead at one bound.

XII.

On December 5th he was to succeed Superintendent Littleman as county superintendent, so he presented himself at the office promptly at 9 o'clock. The Professor was already there, and was bustling around the room in a cloud of dust. He had pulled a few dusty records and blanks out from equally dusty shelves, and was placing them on the table. They had not been disturbed by use, or a duster, for many a day.

"Good-morning, Professor," said Silas, on entering the room.

"Good-morning, sir," replied the Professor. "I suppose you have come to relieve me of my duties here?"

"Yes, sir," replied Silas, "I am here for that purpose, but there is no haste on my part. I only came up early so that I might be able to get a few pointers from you before you found it necessary to leave. I assure you that I shall be very much obliged for any information or advice you see fit to give me before leaving. I have much to learn, I am sure, and your advice and help will benefit the people."

"Mighty little would I help you for the people's sake, I can tell you, sir," retorted the Professor. "Did they show any gratitude to me for all I

have done for them? Have I not served them here for many years, and given them the best part of my life, and now live to see the day when I am kicked out of office by them? Oh, no; I have no thanks nor help for them. Neither do I owe you anything. Yet I am not averse to giving you a little help if you are quick about it. This is my busy day, and I have much yet to do. What can I do for you, Mr. Cobb?"

"You can't do anything for me, Mr. Littleman, I assure you. You might possibly have done something to aid the work of the schools, by giving me such information and advice that any new man in the work would need, but, so far as I am personally concerned, I do not need any help in your power to give. Neither would I feel like accepting it if you had, considering the feeling you display."

"Very well, sir," said the Professor, "then please sign this receipt for the records and other supplies of the office, and I will be through with you and the office for good. Here is the receipt," and this is a copy of the one he handed to Silas:

December 5, 188—.

Received of L. J. Littleman, the following records and supplies:

1 Record of Teachers' Examinations.

1 Record Book (blank).

Miscellaneous lot of blanks.

1 office desk.

6 chairs.

Silas looked over the two records and found that only one of them had been used. He asked what the blank record was for. The Professor said it could be used for anything he might see fit to record in it. The Teachers' record was the only one he needed to keep. Perhaps Mr. Cobb would need more bookkeeping. Silas asked him only one more question, and that was in regard to the institute fund. "Oh," he said, "you can get that from the County Treasurer. He keeps a record of it, I suppose."

"All right, Mr. Littleman, I am much obliged to you. I will try to get along now, if you have nothing further to say."

"I'll bid you good-day, then, sir," said Littleman.

"Good-morning, sir," replied Cobb, and the interview was over.

The actions of the Professor had been so contemptible, and his incompetency so glaring, as evidenced by the manner in which he had kept his books, and this, together with the condescension he had shown, made Silas thoroughly disgusted with him. So much so, that he declared to himself that no such a scene should take place when he went out of office. He would do his very

best to show his successor every courtesy, though he should be a bitter enemy.

While Silas was still in this state of mind, old Henry Boggs came in to see how "the boy" looked in his new honors. "Come in, Mr. Boggs, and let me display a rather bad temper to you. I am so disgusted with the state of things here that I feel like making a hasty vow to you. At any rate, I am going to make you a pledge of honor as a guarantee to my successor in office. Whoever he may be, whether friend or bitter enemy, he shall receive a cordial greeting on the day I turn over the office to him, and I shall remain with him as long as he desires, giving him needed information as to the details of the work. My worthy predecessor, who has left me with simply a 'good-day, sir,' turned over these two books here, as the complete office outfit. If this is all there is to the office, the remainder of it must be a matter of memory, and his memory at that. He left without offering a word of advice, though I did ask him to advise me on what he thought I needed. I suppose I will, in time, get the odd ends together, but it would have been an easy task for him to help me get a start. In fact, it was his duty to have everything written up and a record made of it. As it is, this record of examination of teachers is the only thing here that has a mark in it. This book with it has never been used at all. So you

see I am to begin work to-day with an examination record as the basis. Who are the teachers, and where teaching? I don't know. Who are the school officers, and where are the school districts and school houses located? I don't know. What has he been doing and where has he kept all this vast amount of data that ought to be a permanent record of the office? I don't know. I say this to you, Mr. Boggs, as I would to a father, and I would not have you discuss it outside, but I think a man who will hold a public office as long as Superintendent Littleman has, and turn it over to his successor in such an outrageous condition, is one of two things: He is either dishonest or incompetent. And so far as I am concerned, I wouldn't have any choice between the two conditions. But I want you to be my witness to-day, and disown me if I fail in the least, that I shall leave every act of my official career a matter of record, open to inspection, so that my successors will see what has been done. There shall be no doubts about what I did and didn't do. My records in the office will show it in detail. Now what do I know about his institute fund? Not a thing. This office shows that he never had any by its silence on the subject. The very idea of a public officer handling a large sum of money annually and never keeping an official account of it in his office is simply little short of criminal."

XIII.

Mr. Boggs was a little surprised at this tirade, as it was not like Mr. Cobb to criticise sharply the acts of others.

"Silas," he said, "ye make me happy. I alus thought ye a girl in temper, but plagued ef I don't believe ye can git up some spunk any how." "Silas," continued the old man impressively, "I ain't got any edication, as ye well know, an' I ain't goin' t' say anything about sich matters, but ef ye don't mind t' listen t' an old man like me, I want t' say somethin' t' ye like I would t' a son uv my own."

"I do hope you will, Mr. Boggs," said Silas. "I know you have learned many things that would be a great help to a boy like me. Do go on."

"Well, ef ye don't mind, Silas, I want t' give ye some uv my observin's. I have lived in these here parts nigh on fifty years now, comin' here when I wus about twenty-three years old, jest about yer age I reckon. When I wus leavin' my old hum in Indiany, I wus jest sixteen. That wus seven years afore I come here. My old pap give me some mighty good advice, but good as it wus, it seems t' me now I never got a good hold on it fer more'n fifteen years. It jest sometimes seems t' me a man's got t' git blistered a few times afore

he finally keeps away from bilin' water. The mornin' I wus leavin' hum t' work fer myself, my old pap, he says t' me, 'Henry, come with me t' the field this mornin', I want t' give ye some wholesome advice afore ye 'gin goin' fer yerself.' I says 'alright, pap', an' I trotted along side the double shovel plow an' old Nell till we got in t' the cornfield. Then my old pap, he says: 'Henry, yer 'bout makin' a start out in the world fer yerself now, an' I can give ye nothin' in money. The only thing I can give ye is my observin's uv life as it is lived in the world. 'Pears to me now, Henry, lookin' back over nigh onto sixty years, that I mought have been a rich man, an' able t' give ye a start in life, ef I had done some things that wa'n't jest straight. Then agin, I mought have lost it agin, ye can't tell. But, Hennie, there's one thing I saved by not bein' able t' give ye a start in life. I saved havin' that feelin' I'd have a givin' ye a start with money I took from some one else by trick or stealth. I am an old man now, an' not long t' live, an' I tell ye, Hennie, its the pleasantest thing uv my life t' feel I ain't wronged no one that I knows uv. Ever' man has his own row t' hoe er plow as he sees fit. No matter which implement he uses, ef he uses it well. Now it 'pears t' me that this row uv corn here is pretty much like a man's life. Ye start out in it, an' there'll be weeds a plenty a

growin'. Now there's an old kuckle burr a growin' rank. Ef I don't hold a steady han' when my

"Now it 'pears t' me this row uv corn here is pretty much like a man's life."

plow strikes it, it'll slip off t' one side an' make me plow up a hill uv corn. Ye see, Henry, it not only leaves the burr growin' t' scatter its pesky seeds through the hull field, but it destroys a hill

uv corn in t' the bargain. Ye'r understandin' what I'm drivin' at, ain't ye, Henry?' I says 'yes, pap; ye mean fer me t' make believe that the burrs air the bad things that git root in a man's heart, an' that in gittin' root somethin' good is choked out.' 'That's it 'zactly, son', he says, 'ye got t' hoe a steady course an' plow clear through t' the end uv the row. Whenever pesky weeds git in yer way, uproot them t' once. Don't argue it at all; ef ye do ye are lost.'

"Now, Silas, that is jest as nigh as I can recollec' what my old pap told me, an' it took jest about fifteen years afore I got t' thinkin' much about it. When a feller's young he don't worry about sich things much. But ye'r beginnin' life in a public office, an' ye'r young yit. There'll be them that will represent the kuckle burr, an' try t' make ye plow up a hill o' corn fer their sakes. There'll be many times, too, Silas, when ye'll be tempted t' do it. But when ye come t' one uv them temptin' places, jest recollec' old Henry's kuckle burrs, an' uproot 'em. Fer ef you don't, ye'll have what my old pap called a 'rocky row.' It'll be so bloomin' full uv burrs in a year ye won't be able t' see the corn. There'll be politicians, too, who'll come t' ye in the interest uv some frien'. They don't know nor keer how well edicated er fit they be fer teachin'. That cuts no figger with them. They want ye t' give 'em a

certif-i-kate. Ye'r likely t' think ye would ruin yerself ef ye failed t' favor these chaps, but ye wouldn't, Silas. Ye jest smile an' treat 'em nice, but let 'em understan' ye'll settle the matter 'cordin' t' rules. By an' by, as yer cultivatin' goes on, ye will see less an' less uv them burrs in yer row, an', in time, ye can hope not t' see a cussed one. They can't stan' hard plowin'. Now, Silas, my son, them's the words uv an old man whose observin's have been spread out over three-quarters uv a century. I've been uprootin' them kuckle burrs fer many years, an', t' be honest with ye, Silas, the's a good many left yit, but not nigh so many as the' was t' begin with, an' I am feelin' pretty comfortable. Don't keep me nothin' like busy uprootin' 'em. So them's my words, Silas. I ain't covered no particular pints. I jest give ye the general principles that fits all uv us."

The old man stopped and gazed reflectively at the floor. His mind, no doubt, was hunting for something long ago lost—perhaps before Silas Cobb was born.

When he failed to continue his philosophy, Silas thanked him heartily for his advice, and told him he was sure it would be a guide to him in many a doubtful place.

XIV.

Just at this point, Mr. Cobb received his second caller. A young lady, perhaps twenty-two years of age, appeared in the doorway, and, with her

"Held out her hands to him with a glad smile and hearty greeting."

appearance, old man Boggs uttered a sigh of admiration. She had a wonderful face, and a figure to match it. Dark eyes, wavy black hair, ruddy cheeks and lips, and a complexion almost transparent. She came right up to Mr. Cobb, like an old friend, which she was, and held out her hands to him, with a glad smile and hearty greeting.

"Mr. Cobb, I came up early to congratulate you. I can hardly tell you how glad I am you were elected. When I first heard of it I intended to write you, but I concluded I would rather wait and come to you myself, so you could see how much I meant it."

"I believe you, Miss Howe," said Silas, "and it does me a great deal of good, and pays me a compliment I appreciate very much, to have you come. How are you, anyway, Julia? It's a long time since you and I ran barefoot together over the dusty roads, isn't it? Let's see; it's now fourteen year's ago, isn't it? We were just nine years old then; your birthday came in June and mine in May."

"Now that's a perfect shame, Mr. Cobb, that you should remember that so well. I shall never be able to conceal my age from you, shall I? And there, too, you have given it away to Mr. Boggs, who, I am sure, will tell it to all the young men of his neighborhood." So the light

talk ran on for some time, all of which told the story of Miss Julia Howe's character to a keen observer as plainly as if it were a printed page. She was very pretty, and no one knew it so well as herself. She was vain and selfish, and had a very superficial knowledge of what she had been teaching. In short, it was plainly apparent that the years of her maturity had been passed over successfully, on account of her good looks. As old Henry Boggs expressed it a little later, "She traveled on her shape."

This fact had been commented on many times before by people who knew her. A few months later, Miss Jessie Parks, a very staunch character, teaching in No. 7, Muddy Creek Township, remarked to another teacher one day: "Well, I don't know how it is that Julia Howe gets along as well as she does. She gets as good, if not a better, certificate every year than I do. She seems to get the best school to teach. She never attends teachers' meetings. She has a very limited knowledge of the common branches. In fact, I have helped her on simple problems that my pupils are conversant with, and grammar she has no knowledge of whatever. Yet, with all that, she gets along better than I do, while I work at the profession the year round, and attend all educational meetings."

"I know why," said her friend. "It's because

she's as pretty as she can be. No man can resist that face and smile of hers. She jollies them into giving her anything she wants. It's the same way with school boards. Why, do you know, that girl never failed to get any school she ever applied for, if a teacher had not been engaged? School boards are her easiest marks. Oh, she is a jollier from away back! You and I, Jessie, are neither handsome nor young any more, and can't hope to compete with Julia Howe. We've got to make up for it by being absolutely first-class in our work."

"Well, I don't know about the competition, now," remarked Miss Parks. "I fancy Silas Cobb is not going to be greatly influenced by Julia. He is not much of a hand for girls, anyway; besides he is absolutely honest and straightforward in his manners. I rather think you will find Julia working on the ground floor with us this year."

"Don't you think it," said her friend. "Si Cobb is flesh and bone, same as other men, and you just mark my words, Julia Howe can bend him round her finger in a day. Why, he is young, and has never been around much. He'll be just like a child in her hands. Look how she has had the Professor under her thumb for years. Anything she wanted to do, she did, and anything she didn't want to do, she didn't do, and the Professor let

her go. If it had been you or me, we would have received notice of a revocation of our certificates."

"You need not compare Silas Cobb to the Professor," Miss Parks retorted. "You don't know him, or you wouldn't speak that way. He has a mind of his own, and Julia will not be able to twist him about. She will be the one that will be twisted, and I shall be greatly surprised if she isn't broken in the operation, too."

This discussion between two leading teachers of the county will give the reader a fair estimate of Miss Julia Howe's reputation, and what seemed to be her *long suit.*

XV.

After she had c hatted for a half hour over trifles with Mr. Cobb and Mr. Boggs, she left, promising to call again soon.

"Gee whiz!" com mented Mr. Boggs. "She's pretty as a pictur', ain't she, Si? Sufferin' Moses! ef that gal ain't a re g'lar peach. Si, how come ye t' know her?"

"Oh, she and I we re children together before my parents died. We lived next door to the Howes', and Julia and I played together for two years. I have met her quite often since then, and we have kept our old friendship alive. She is a very beautiful girl, and it distresses me just a little. Seems to me I see a little trouble ahead of me."

He fell into a deep study for a moment, and the old man seemed to be thinking along the same lines.

"Say, Si, I fergot t' tell ye about another weed that's dif'runt from the kuckle burr. What makes this here weed so bad is, when it grows up next t' the corn, ye can kursly tell it from the corn. It has leaves jest about like the corn, as it were, and, while it ain't hard t' uproot, it takes a good eye t' know it. An' do ye know, Si, that the's jest lots uv men in this world who ain't

never been able t' tell which from tother, an' they go on cultivatin' this thing, which ain't neither corn nor weed, an' they never find out the diffrunce till they begin shuckin' in the fall. Ye ketch my meanin', don't ye, Si?"

"Yes, Mr. Boggs, I understand you thoroughly, and was thinking how splendidly you illustrated a point that neither of us feel like openly discussing."

"That's so, that's so," said Mr. Boggs. "The gal's a perfect lady; no doubt uv that. She needs trainin', an' dependence on her own pasture. I should jedge she's been browsin' on other people's fodder fer some time back."

"Come, Mr. Boggs, it is past noon. You are to go to dinner with me. I am going to board at the City Hotel, and shall want my baggage taken there. Major Kent is a nice old fellow, and will be greatly pleased to have me stop with him. Come, let us go over."

When they walked into the little hotel office, they found the Major behind the desk. He was very tall, and very thin; had a little bunch of whiskers under his chin, and a row of white false teeth; wore a Prince Albert coat and brown trousers, year in and year out.

"Why, bless my life, ef it ain't that old hairy Boggs an' Si Cobb! Come in, ye old gorilla, I'm jest as glad as I can be t' see ye, anyhow.

How be Mis' Boggs? An' Si, how be ye, too? Air ye holdin' office t' day, a-greetin' uv yer friends?"

The old Major asked so many questions, and never waited for answers, nor wanted any, for that matter, that no particular attention was given to answering them.

Mr. Boggs, with a twinkle of humor in his eye, looked at Silas, and said: "Don't see nothin' wantin' in that greetin', do ye, Si? It seems proper fer two uv the biggest politicians in the hull county t' be given the glad han' by a great sojer like the Major. I fergive ye the ugly names ye called me, ye old rail splitter, 'cause yer a pretty good old skeleton, anyhow." After they had finished joking each other, Silas engaged the best room in the house, and showed Mr. Boggs into his new home.

That afternoon they went back to the office, and took another look at what there was in the way of supplies. That didn't take long. The record book, before mentioned, containing a list of teachers' certificates issued, was the only scrap of evidence there was that there had ever been a county superintendent. It was evident at once to Silas' logical mind that the first thing he needed was a complete set of books to properly record all his official acts. But what books? and what kind?—that was the question.

"Say, Silas," said Mr. Boggs, "who wus that young feller up at Springfield ye told me uv, that made old Blockhead hunt his hole, an' crawl in, pullin' it after him? There's the feller ye want t' see t' once."

"Why, that's Superintendent Ed Smith, of Brownville. I hadn't thought of him. Yes, sir, he's the man I want to see this very night. I will just get on the 5 o'clock train and run over there, and come back on the morning train. Mr. Smith will be glad to help me get started, I am sure."

"That's shorely true, Silas. Ye can git somethin' fresh an' good from that feller. He's young, and been in office long enough t' find out some uv his mistakes."

XVI.

That night Silas called on Mr. Smith and received a very warm welcome. When he had stated the object of his visit, Mr. Smith said:

"Why, of course, I shall be delighted to do everything I can for you. To begin with, Mr. Cobb, I want to say to you that I didn't show the good judgment you have when I came into office. I went to work and got out a lot of records and had them made up to my order. My mistake was in doing this before I had ever seen anyone else's records or talked to anyone about it. The people who made my books were first-class workmen, and you will see the records are all well made, but they knew nothing about matters of supervision, and were unable to give me any advice. I have since found that the books were not what I want at all. If I had gone to some wide-awake superintendent, and examined his books or put myself in communication with some house that makes a specialty of this work, I would have been infinitely better off. I have since been shown whole sets of records for every department of work, that embodies every known convenience and requirement in the simplest manner, by the representative of a publishing house that does nothing but study the needs of our work and

make our supplies. Had I gone to them in the first place I would have been able to show you a system of office records to be proud of, but instead I have now only to show you my mistakes, which perhaps will help you equally as well.

"As an evidence of my mistake, look at this ponderous volume here. It contains eight or ten different forms, and not one of them is made up as I would make them now, in the light of what I have seen. I could have purchased all of these forms in separate books, more convenient to handle, and infinitely better adapted to the work, for just about half what this book cost the county to make it. There is no use, Mr. Cobb, for a superintendent, the first term he is in office, no matter how bright he may be, to attempt to improve on the forms and records put on the market by men who have been engaged in it for years. To do so presupposes these men to be half-witted, or at best not overly bright in the occupation they have taken up as a specialty. As a matter of fact they have their salesmen out all over the United States, and are in a position to get all the latest ideas on everything new, and as a business proposition, they are not slow to adopt the best. It is reasonably safe to take what they offer you in preference to attempting to make up something new yourself."

Then Mr. Smith went from book to book, and

showed Silas Cobb all the work he had done. Not a thing was missing. There was a record that showed the location of every teacher in the county, and all the information that was of any use was given in detail. There were school officers' records and examination records, both for teachers and pupils. There were the records of finance and letter books, all kept in the most exact manner. In regard to the records of the institute fund, Mr. Smith said:

"Mr. Cobb, I want to especially call your attention to the importance of keeping your institute fund account in the most systematic manner possible. This is a matter that the county commissioners will examine into every term, and sometimes every year. It ought to be kept so there would be no doubt or guess work about the correctness of the account. Should you keep this account in a loose, careless manner, an enemy could make you a great deal of annoyance by insinuating that your accounts were not what they ought to be. Such a criticism made to a county board of commissioners in connection with a poorly kept set of books would do you infinite damage, not only with the board but with the people. The fact that the books were poorly kept would be ground for suspicion. Now what I did, as soon as I found that the needs of the office called for it, was to buy a full set of records

for this fund, consisting of a ledger with properly headed columns for all kinds of certificates, renewals, and rejections, for each month, together with the items of expense; a book of reports to the county treasurer with stubs for treasurer's receipts; and a book of warrants against the fund, a stub of which showed all deposits and balances.

"Now these three books constitute quite an accurate account of the fund, and will check with each other. Thus the treasurer's receipts check with the same deposit entered on the stub of my warrant book, and this in turn checks with the amount of the month's receipts entered in the ledger. The first year of my work I had nothing of this kind. My predecessor left an ordinary fifty cent double column ledger in the office, and nothing more. I kept my accounts just as he did his, and turned that little old thing over to the board to 'check up.' There happened to be a banker on the board that year and when he saw that book, you ought to have seen the disgust pictured on his face. 'Mr. Smith,' he said, 'Is this all the bookkeeping you have?' I told him it was. 'Well, where are your warrant stubs, and receipts for deposits, etc?' I didn't have any and told him I supposed they had been lost, as they were kept in a pigeon hole in the desk. The other two members had been on the board for

years and they had never seen anything of the kind, and didn't know much about such matters anyway. 'Well, I'll tell you, gentlemen, what I think about it,' said the banker. 'I think there is no doubt about Mr. Smith having accounted for every dollar of the fund, but to save our lives, we can't prove it by his books. I, as one of this board, advise Mr. Smith to open up a complete set of books so this fund can be properly accounted for. The idea of any one having so little sense as to buy such a thing as this book in which to keep a permanent account for the county is past my understanding,' and with that he tossed the old paper-backed ledger over to me, in disgust, and said: 'If I kept my bank's accounts that way, I would land in the penitentiary before the year was up.' And it is a fact, too, he would. These books I am showing you were purchased from a publishing house at ——, a short time afterwards, and when I presented them to the board the next year, each took a book, (there are three you see) and checked my accounts in twenty minutes. They were very much pleased and the banker told me I was a genius to get up such a set of books. I was tempted to let him believe it.

"Here are my letter books. In these you will find every letter, of an official nature, I ever wrote. They are indexed, and the books are all

labeled, so I can tell in what book to look for a certain letter. Many say this is nonsense, but I tell you it is a great deal of satisfaction to me, and I often find use for them."

After a few hours spent as above indicated, Silas Cobb had just about all he could absorb at one sitting, and after thanking Superintendent Smith and promising to come again soon for more help, he went home. It is unnecessary to add that he at once procured a full set of records and started his work from the beginning along the most approved lines.

XVII.

The first few weeks he had much to do in gathering together the loose ends of the office, and getting his work mapped out. While he was doing this there was much gossip in Cowville as to his probable success. Many still claimed that a great mistake had been made in replacing Professor Littleman, a man of great experience, with a boy of no experience whatever. "Why, what could they expect from such an upstart?" said some. Others said he couldn't be any worse than Littleman was, and there were many others still, who claimed that they could see many reasons why more could be expected than ever before. So matters stood that way for several months, until Silas began to quietly create an impression on the people. This was his formative period. He was not only taking form and growing, but he was also shaping the opinions of his people by the manner in which he conducted himself.

One day after he had been in office six weeks, he was thinking about calling a meeting of the teachers. It had been customary for years to have one county meeting of teachers each year. While he was debating this point in his mind, it occurred to him that it was not of very much use after all, to have only a few hours of a year for discussion

of educational subjects. Why not have several meetings, in fact one a month. Then he saw the objection to that was the necessary expense teachers would incur in coming so far to attend. Then why couldn't there be several meetings held at different places in the county, so the teachers would have to spend neither too much money nor time to attend? From this idea he developed his plans rapidly. He would have about ten different places of meeting. He would select a local leader for each of these meetings, and they should be held monthly. That would give ample opportunity for teachers to keep abreast of the times. Then, too, it would help to give the teachers a clear understanding of the course of study which he proposed to introduce. There they could discuss every phase of it from month to month. By this time he had become so enthusiastic over the subject that he must talk to some one about it. He went over to see John Brainard, principal of the schools of Cowville, a bright fellow of his own age. He explained the plan to Mr. Brainard, and received his enthusiastic endorsement of it at once. "Yes, sir, Mr. Cobb," said Brainard, "you may put me down as one of your most earnest workers. I will take charge of the work of this section for you, as you request, and I pledge you the encouragement of every teacher under me."

Here is where Superintendent Cobb showed

off to his best advantage. He was gifted with unusual good judgment. He was almost always able to properly weigh any new matter presented to him. Add to this, then, his fearlessness, and you have two good qualities combined. Silas Cobb never hesitated after he made up his mind what ought to be done. It was on this point that, in after years, he outclassed most of his colleagues. While his neighboring superintendents (except Mr. Smith) were leisurely debating the advisability of adopting certain plans, Silas Cobb would not only have decided the matter one way or the other for himself, but would probably have completed the test in actual practice. In the course of a conversation with Superintendent Smith one day, Mr. Smith said: "The greatest trouble, Mr. Cobb, with most people, is that they work too slowly. They think too sluggishly. A man's life is very short. Sometimes his political life is extremely short, and he must think hard and fast, and act. He can't make much of a show or do much good if he spends half of his term of office trying to decide whether it is best to do this or that. We had better make mistakes now and then as a result of hasty acts, than to do nothing but think. The good one does ought to over-balance his mistakes, if he keeps everlastingly at it. Now there's Superintendent Slowly, over at Sandy Crossing; you know him, don't you? Well, that

fellow, to my personal knowledge, has spent two years debating the matter of introducing a course of study in his schools. He has consulted no less than 200 teachers and school officers on the subject, and he is not yet clear as to the best course to pursue. He will spend an hour getting the idea pounded into the head of some dense school officer for the sake of getting his opinion upon it. If it happens to be unfavorable to the project, he becomes doubtful right away. One day I shocked him by telling him bluntly what I thought of such work. He asked me what I did when I adopted the course. I told him I just adopted it, that's all; didn't wiggle-waggle around about it, either; just simply purchased 150 copies of the course and mailed one to each teacher. Wrote her full particulars how to proceed with it, and told her to proceed. A month later I wrote asking for a report of progress, which brought out the fact that several teachers were of the opinion such a thing was impracticable, and they had done nothing with it. Here's where I shocked Mr. Slowly. He wanted to know what I said to those teachers. 'What I said?' I repeated rather brusquely. 'Why, I just wrote them that I didn't ask for their opinion. I wanted to know what progress they had made, and they could have their choice between a dismissal or following the instructions of the office.' Well, sir, you

ought to have seen his face. Of course I didn't put it quite so bluntly to the mossbacks as I told him, but they seemed to understand it clearly. 'Why, how could you dismiss them?' he said. I answered, 'Revoke their certificates for insubordination.' 'Oh, you couldn't do that,' was his reply. 'Well,' I said, 'I'll tell you, Mr. Slowly; the only difference I can see between you and me is, I run the affairs of my county as I think they ought to go. Over in your county you don't do anything without consulting about everybody in your county before you do it, and then you don't have time to do it decently; besides, you let the teachers disobey your instructions whenever they see fit to follow their own ideas instead. Whenever I have a teacher who thinks she can't follow my instructions because her own judgment is so much better, I simply drop her from my list after having given her due time and notice to improve her opinion. I just do it, that's all, and I want to tell you that my teachers now would no more think of not doing their very best to carry out every detail of my instructions than they would think of asking me to revoke their certificates. Teachers will do just as you let them. They will either run over you, or follow your instructions, according to what they think will be the safest and most convenient plan of action."

That was Mr. Smith's idea of how a superin-

tendent ought to conduct himself, and it was entirely in accord with Silas Cobb's idea also. The difference between the two men was in the manner of prosecution. Superintendent Smith was rather blunt, and made little effort to soften his words. He often made enemies as a result of it, while Silas Cobb would say the same thing in substance, and make friends. It is only a matter of words and manner of using them.

"Howdy-do, gentlemen—plague take them hogs, anyhow."—(Page 9.)

XVIII.

Let us come back to Superintendent Cobb's association plans. He divided his county into ten districts and named a local manager for each, and prepared the programs for the first month's work. He mailed them to all the teachers, together with a circular letter outlining his plans. It provoked a great deal of discussion all over the county. Professor Littleman thought it a great joke, and encouraged adverse comment. It got to such a point that many teachers did not attend the first meeting. They did not favor the idea, anyway, and being encouraged by so many adverse criticisms, they stayed away with a feeling of perfect safety.

These meetings were called for the month of March, and when Silas got his first reports he was rather encouraged. The first five managers to report told of fairly interesting meetings, with probably 50 per cent of the teachers present. The last five to report showed almost complete failures. Three of the local managers had no teachers present, and the other two had only a few. He reflected a great deal over these conditions, and wondered just what course he should pursue to keep them going. He knew exactly what Smith would do under the circumstances, and concluded that he would do the same. He

wrote a sharp, forceful circular on the subject, and mailed it to each teacher. Then he got the newspapers interested and filled a column a week on this and other subjects for the next three months. By exerting every effort he could think of, he managed to keep the ten divisions alive until they could adjourn for the summer vacation. It had been up-hill work, and Professor Littleman, who was out of a job and had nothing else to do, pronounced his effort a great blunder and a flat failure.

Superintendent Smith, however, wrote him a nice letter, saying that he had done something quite right, and that he was going to copy his idea the next year. He wanted to meet him and discuss ways and means.

This greatly encouraged Silas, and he began to plan for his next year's work.

At the summer institute Superintendent Cobb made a good impression. There he almost destroyed the last vestige of influence Professor Littleman had. Not by making war on the Professor, but by treating everybody in such a wholesouled manner that there was no alternative. He almost broke the Professor's opposition, also, by showing him marked attention. The Professor had called at the institute, not to attend, but to put another nail or so into Silas's coffin, while he incidentally visited with the teachers. "He was

a sly dog," as old Henry Boggs once remarked. But the Professor was disarmed as soon as he crossed the threshold of the building. Silas met him at the door and greeted him warmly; took him from class to class, asked his opinion about this and that, and wound up by asking him to make a speech to the assembled teachers. He consented to do this. He was very fond of his own speeches, and thought he always did well.

While he was being shown around, the teachers were taking in the situation. They remembered how Silas had been compelled to leave the Professor's class the year before on account of being repeatedly insulted. They now saw him cordially treated by Mr. Cobb, and requested to talk to the teachers.

While Mr. Cobb was making an announcement from the platform, Miss Josephine Alger whispered across the aisle to Miss Bender, "Say, how do you think the Professor feels now? Don't you think the coals will burn him?" "No," snapped Miss Bender, "nothing there to burn." Then they both giggled, and the Professor got up and made them all tired with his empty words. That day he lost his power over even a small minority of teachers, and Silas Cobb rose correspondingly higher in their estimation.

XIX.

Some three weeks before the institute began, Miss Julia Howe called for the third time on Silas at his office. Her former calls had been social ones, devoted entirely to an effort to become "solid with the office," "get a stand in." Silas understood it all and watched the play with much interest. He had his mind made up to one thing, and that happened to be adverse to giving any favors to Miss Howe. He remembered that she had not been present at a single teachers' meeting since he came into office, and had not, apparently, even given the matter a thought.

On the morning of this third visit she came fluttering into the office, smiling and happy, and extended her pretty soft hands to Silas. It was a heart-warming trick of hers to always extend both her hands, and this morning she placed one in each of Silas' strong muscular palms, and gave them a hearty lingering squeeze. It was such a warm, cordial greeting, so full of life, health and happiness, that Silas felt it quivering through every nerve.

"Why, good-morning, Julia. You come fluttering in here like a ray of sunshine, happy as a bird. Are you always happy? Do you never have a serious thought?"

"Never, Silas. In my whole life I don't remember ever having the blues, and as to serious thoughts, I hope I won't get them too soon. I want to always remain young and pretty. There, now, listen to that; assuming that I am pretty. Why don't you tell me I am, now? Didn't I fix up my hair, and wear all this pretty toggery to-day, just to make my old playfellow say I was just perfect?" she said, laughing.

She paused and waited for Silas to finish his survey of her hat and hair, and finally, with a smile, he answered: "I will tell you one thing, Julia, it is a vast improvement over the toggery you had on that day, fourteen years ago, when you and I ran away and went to your Grandma Owen's to get some sweet apples. That day you had on an old straw hat you picked up in the wood-shed, It must have belonged to the hired man some time in the past. You didn't dare to go in after your own, you know. Then as to dress, I think you just had a little slip of a dress of some kind on that reached to your knees. Beyond that, that is, below that, you were not dressed at all. Neither was I, for that matter. So, viewing your costume in the light of those childhood days, I should consider you elegantly dressed. But as to your being pretty, that I should not dare to pass upon in an official capacity. That is not stipulated as a requirement. But I

will say this much: I see no improvement now as compared with your looks in those old days." He

"That day you had on an old straw hat."

smiled at his roundabout compliment of her youth and waited for her reply. She looked rather puz-

zled and asked. "You liked me better then with all those old rags on than you do now when I am decently dressed?"

"Yes, I really liked you better then, Julia, because you had so many little ways that you have outgrown now, and you have acquired so many new manners, I can scarcely recall the old impression of you when you are in my presence. When you are not here I never think of you as you are to-day, but as you were then."

"Silas, it must be that slip of a dress you speak of that I have outgrown, isn't it? But after all, I remember that day very vividly. You had on an old cap, and your face was dirty. You came across the meadow back of our barn, on the run, and peeped through the bars by our wood-shed, and called to me breathlessly, 'Oh, Julia, come on, quick, and let's go to your grandma's and get some of them sweet apples. Hurry, I've runned off, and papa might see me.' I was playing in the wood-shed with my dolls, and had no hat. When I started in to get one, you protested vigorously. 'Your mamma wouldn't let you come, Julia; don't you go in; get that old straw hat and come quick.' With that I grabbed the old hat, and you actually pulled me through between those bars, when a gentleman would have pulled them down. Then you kept hold of my hand and we just heeled it over the meadow, along the

fence, till we came to your father's cornfield, then you crawled through a big crack between the rails and pulled me through after you. And right

"And peeped through the bars by our wood-shed."

there, Silas Cobb, you did an ungentlemanly trick; you kissed me when I stepped on a briar and cried. Then we heeled it again down along

the corn rows till I couldn't stand it any longer. There was a briar in my big toe. We stopped under an old bellflower apple-tree and sat down. You undertook to get that briar out of my toe.

"We just heeled it over the meadow."

I was crying. Your fingers were all thumbs. You got out an old broken-bladed knife and

began. I never suffered so in my life, but you butchered away at that toe until you just about cut it off. You finally got the briar out, and in order to soothe my wounded spirit and toe, you climbed the old bellflower and got me a lap full of green apples. Then you got some silks off the young corn and gathered some clover blossoms along the fence row for my old straw hat. Then we went to grandma's orchard and got all the sweet apples we could eat, and grandma didn't know we had run off. When we got home I was locked up in the bed-room for a whole hour for it, and you, Silas Cobb, got a licking, as you justly deserved, for running off with a young lady who didn't know any better."

At this reminiscence Silas laughed heartily. He remembered it all, just as she had related it, and though it had almost been forgotten, it only needed the telling to bring it all clearly before him. By drawing aside the curtain that hid this little bit of childhood drama, Silas' mood had been considerably softened.

"Julia," he said, "you have a good memory, and can tell a delightful story. If you would use that power in the schoolroom, you could teach some wonderful truths to the pupils while they listened to you spell-bound."

"I don't know about the story business, Silas,

but I do have a good memory, and do not forget my old playmates if they do forget me," she replied with a laugh.

"Butchered away at that toe"

XX.

"By the way, Mr. Cobb," said Julia, "before I forget it, I want to ask you a question. Do we all have to attend the institute this year, and take the examination?"

"Yes," he said, "I have decided to make a full examination test of all the teachers this year. After that I shall be guided by their professional conduct, largely. But this year I want to issue new certificates on my own grades, and put everybody on an even footing."

"Well, I am awfully afraid I can't pass a first-grade examination, on account of not having done any work in the higher branches for some time. If you make your test hard, I shall fail, I know."

She said this in such a frank and sincere manner that Silas was quite a little affected by it. Then he remembered she had not attended a single teachers' meeting during the year, and the thought of it provoked him very much.

"Now, Julia, you claim not to be able to pass this examination. You knew this long ago. Yet all year you have not attended a single teachers' meeting, and, if I am not mistaken, you called to-day to get an excuse from attending the institute. Am I not right?"

"Yes, sir, I did, but—"

"Well, wait a moment, Julia; I want to tell you that I would like to favor you very much, for old friendship's sake, if nothing else, but you have not done your duty, and I just can't show you any favors that I do not show my best teachers. It wouldn't be treating them right, nor would it be treating you right, either."

Julia looked at him for a moment in a manner indicating that her feelings had been deeply wounded, and she didn't know what to say next. It was rather against her pride to have things told to her that way. No other superintendent (and she had taught in three counties) had ever spoken that way. Why should he do it of all others—the man she had played with as a child. He ought to be good to her, and make her work as easy as possible. Silas was looking steadily at her. His countenance was even solicitous and anxious.

"Julia, I shall expect you to attend the institute and take the examination, and I warn you now that you will get the same treatment other teachers get."

"Well, what kind of treatment do you think I want? I can take your examination if I have to, and I will, too, so there, now. Nobody ever treated me so cruelly before."

Then she cried, just as she did when she got the briar in her foot, long ago.

Silas was still and thoughtful while she was crying. He was wondering if he were not too hard on her, and half inclined to weaken a little, when he remembered old Henry Boggs' last advice: "There's a weed I fergot t' tell ye uv, Si, that grows in next t' the corn. It has a leaf 'bout like the corn, an' many people go on cultivatin' it an' never know the diffrunce till shuckin' time." When these homely words rang through his mind, he stiffened up at once. "How like this weed she is," he thought. "Many superintendents have mistaken her for a real teacher, and have gone on encouraging her in her weakness for years." At last he said:

"Julia, I want to help you get rid of some very bad habits. You have been able to make your way along through the profession so far by diplomacy. You are, from what I can judge, looking on the surface, entirely lacking in seriousness. I doubt if you care a straw whether your pupils advance or not. My opinion is you do not read or study along the lines of your work. You have been able to get what you wanted from the superintendents and school boards without working for it. It has crippled you, probably, for life, but you might be able to make up a great deal of the lost opportunities by close application from now on. I am willing to help you, if you will only help yourself."

Her eyes snapped fire. She looked at him in such anger that Silas was shocked. He had never seen anything of the kind in her nature before. She had never met a man in all her life that she could not manage as she saw fit, and get anything she desired. She had gotten so used to that sort of a program that she was no less surprised than Silas was, but on a different point, however. It angered her beyond control, and before she had reflected on the results of such a display of temper, she had said some very hateful things.

"Silas Cobb, you may think it your duty to persecute a poor girl like me, who has to make her living in the world, but it is too contemptible for me to stand without losing my temper. No one ever treated me so shamefully before."

Another burst of crying followed this. Silas got up and left her sitting where she was, weeping, and went out into his public office, closing the door after him. He was greatly wrought up over the matter. He wondered what Superintendent Smith would do with a case like that. Should he try to break her ugly spirit, and attempt to make a teacher of her, or should he dismiss her at once? It was a serious question. He remembered all those childhood days he had spent with her, and that seemed to furnish a good reason why he ought to put up with a great deal, if in the end he could only get her started right.

She had been unfortunate in being born with a beautiful face and form, too beautiful, probably, for the capacity of the mind that came with it. These things should be considered.

While Silas was meditating on the subject, she opened the private office door, came out, and walked out of the front door without looking at him. She slammed the door after her, and it seemed to Silas as though his heart was between the door and the jamb, and received the blow. He had not yet got hardened to scenes like this, and, as he reflected over it later, he heartily wished himself back teaching school in No. 8, away from all this strife and trouble.

XXI.

Silas had hardly gotten the desk dusted and papers rearranged on the desk in his private office the next morning, when there came a timid rap on the door.

"Come in," he called out.

The door opened, and, in a hesitating and humiliated manner, Julia Howe appeared on the threshold.

"Come in, Julia. How are you to-day?"

She never spoke, but with a flushed, troubled countenance, and trembling lips, she came up to him, and took the hand he offered her. She dropped into a chair at the corner of the table as she took his hand, and, without releasing it, she pillowed her face in her arm on the table and, between hysterical sobs, asked him to forgive her for her unlady-like conduct the day before.

Silas was getting decidedly nervous. If some one should happen to come into the outer office and hear that hysterical sobbing, it would be rather embarrassing. He must get her quieted.

"That's all right, Julia. I like the manner in which you conduct yourself this morning—only don't cry that way. Some one will hear you. I appreciate the spirit you display in the matter, and I am very glad to forgive you. Come, now,

dry those eyes quickly;" and, as he talked, he was stroking her black, wavy hair with his free hand, the other being still clutched between hers. "Do

"As he talked he was stroking her black, wavy hair."

hush! There is some one coming up the stairs now."

In a broken voice, she said, "I will," and began wiping her tear-stained face, "only believe that I

am very sorry for what I did—more than I can ever tell you. I don't know what I can do to atone for it."

"That's all right, Julia. You are going to atone for it, for your own sake, by being a good girl, and doing your duty always, and with a happy heart." He covered both of her hands in his, and added, "I can trust you now, Julia. Don't evade anything you think you ought to do. It only makes you weaker. Excuse me a few minutes, please," and, as the outside door opened, he entered his public office, somewhat flushed from his interview, to find himself face to face with Clay Green, a simpering gossip, who conducted a cigar stand down on the square.

Grinning idiotically, he called out in his whimpering tone of voice, "Howdy, Silas? I jest run in t' see how you're gittin' along."

"I am getting along very nicely, sir," replied Silas. "How are your affairs to-day, Mr. Green?"

"Oh, I am doing fairly well, I reckon. Don't have callers so very early in my line. 'Spose you ain't havin' callers this early, either, air you, Silas, or air you alone now?"

"No, I am not alone. One of my teachers is now waiting for me in my private office. Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Green?"

"No, nuthin' 't all. Jest called in to see you

a minute on a friendly visit, that's all. Don't lemme keep you from your company, Silas."

He left the room, grinning and winking, his dried-up face looking much like a withered apple.

From the other side of the door Julia heard every word, and understood its purport. She knew Clay Green to be a dirty old gossip, who spent his time mostly in meddling in other people's affairs. She knew he came over there on purpose to see if he could get a clue on which to start a new scandal. He doted on such things. Silas understood him, also, and knew the object of his visit. He felt a pity for him, rather than anger. This feeling is only possible to those who have a great deal of charity for the weakness of humanity.

Julia came out now, ready for the street, and there seemed to be a new light in her face. The lines around her mouth had taken a new expression, and she seemed less troubled about the future.

"Good-by, Julia. Come up often to see me, and ask me for assistance whenever you need it."

"Good-by, Silas, and thank you for your offer."

"There," he thought, as he sat down; "five months in office, and half ruined already. That fool Green will scatter all sorts of reports about this matter. She has been up here four times, and I'll wager he knows the date and hour of

each visit, and the length of time spent in the office."

That afternoon Henry Boggs dropped in to see how he was getting along.

"Well, how's the weeds comin', Si? Air there as many as they wus at the beginnin'?"

"More, Mr. Boggs."

"Pshaw! Ye don't say. Tell me, Silas, is that there new weed I brung into existence, specially fer yer benefit, got int' the corn right smart aready?"

"That is it, exactly, Mr. Boggs. The trouble is on now."

Then he told Mr. Boggs, in detail, the whole story. The old man listened with great interest, and with many an exclamation of "Sufferin' Moses," etc., to the end. When the narrative was finished, the old gentleman looked very thoughtful, and then a smile played over his rough features, as he remarked: "Ye did mighty well, Silas. Uv course, though, ef it'd been the old man, guess he'd let the gal had her way 'thout protest. Couldn't never stand tears. He'd jest remained nootral, an' let things take their course." Then he laughed heartily, and Silas joined him. It wasn't often the old man joked, and when he did it seemed worth a laugh.

This brings the events down to the institute, heretofore mentioned. Julia Howe had not called

again at the office, and Silas had not seen her until the day the institute convened, when she registered. Her name was the first recorded, and Silas was greatly pleased. He felt the war was over.

XXII.

The institute was one of those old-fashioned, one-week, "one-horse" affairs. Just such institutes had been held there for thirty years. Nothing of value outside of the social and professional character was given. The teachers attended them in a sort of perfunctory manner and because it pleased the county superintendent. They did not expect to learn anything. Why should they? Every year two or three professors of note, who had made a reputation for being good story tellers, had been employed. These men were able to keep them from going to sleep, and that means that they were good entertainers. Teachers were never expected to recite or offer any opinions, so there was no excitement of brain cells, and very little mental growth. Each professor would stand before his class and talk for forty minutes. They had always done that way. Some of the teachers having sensitive minds received a few stray thoughts now and then and stored them away, but the great mass of teachers were not impressed. Superintendent Ed Smith declared that the average mind was of such a nature that it resisted thoughts, and the only way to get them in was to drive them in, as with a hammer. Silas Cobb held just about as poor an

institute that year as any in southern Illinois. The only splendid feature of the whole thing was Silas Cobb himself. Unlike many other superintendents in the State, he pronounced his work very poor. He understood that little good was done. He found on examination of the manuscripts that three-fourths of his teachers actually didn't understand the rudiments of the common branches. Instead of presenting these subjects to the teachers with the best known methods, he had employed lecturers who talked about the principles and philosophy of education and kindred subjects. As soon as he found what the actual condition of his teaching force was, he set about to find some way of improving it. He concluded that the only way to relieve the condition was to either reject fully three-fourths of the present force and replace them with capable, well educated teachers, or else work up to a higher plane the material he had. He found it would be almost impossible to get teachers in other localities to come to Brush county, on account of the low wages paid, and if he cut out the weak three-fourths he would not have enough teachers to fill his schools. His deliberation over the matter resulted in his appointing the last afternoon of the institute for the organization of the County Teachers' Association. Before the day the association was to meet arrived, he selected a local

manager for each of the ten local divisions into which he had divided his county. He was very careful in selecting these local managers, because he wanted to get teachers who would not only make good leaders, but good teachers as well. They should be able to teach a class of fellow teachers in the most approved manner. He then arranged a program for the year's work on the common branches. The teachers must know more about the subject matter. He took up the principal features of each subject in outline, and the local managers were to take charge of the teachers and teach the subject, not as the teachers had been teaching it, but as it ought to be taught. By this method, the subject matter as well as the method would be presented, and teachers who had been floundering along with poor success, would begin to understand why it had been poor. Teachers can't teach successfully what they only half understand.

XXIII.

The local associations were organized on these lines, simply because Silas Cobb forced the matter through by the strong position he took on the subject. When he laid his plans before the teachers, he was surprised to find no enthusiasm over it. There were several who even dared oppose it. One teacher, who had the appearance of having kept school for a great many years, got up, and, in an important manner, wanted to know if the superintendent expected men like him, who had taught school before he was born, to go back to the a b c's again, and, besides that, he did not think it right to expect teachers to take the time on Saturday, that belonged to them, to attend a teachers' meeting. For his own part, Saturdays were his busy days, and he had not attended the meetings held last year, and he didn't think he could attend this year. He didn't approve of the plan anyway.

Silas asked, "Are there others who wish to express themselves? We want to have all who object to this plan of action to say so now, before we begin."

This encouraged a few other old fossils to protest against the monthly meetings. Most of them agreed with the former speaker. They had taught

too long to be required to attend these meetings every month. Might be all right for the young teachers, but for the old ones, never. But there were still many others who agreed with the superintendent that they needed these meetings, this monthly contact, to keep up with the times and improve themselves.

When every one was through talking, Silas Cobb took occasion to make his position clear to them beyond the shadow of a doubt.

"Teachers," he said, "I am going to try to tell you just what my intentions are for the coming year. I want you to know, first, before I go into details, that I am very much interested in your welfare, as well as that of the schools. As a private individual, I am always anxious to help you whenever I possibly can, and, as a public officer, I hope always to do my exact duty by you. I have fully decided in my own mind that the plans I have laid before you are good—the best I know of, at least. I have received your opinions on the subject in a very frank manner. There are many of you who favor this course; there are others who oppose it. You have given your reasons why. The sum of your objections have been, 'I can't spare the time, and I don't need to go back to my a b c's.'

"After hearing these objections, I am still of the opinion I am right. The reason I have not

changed, perhaps, is because several of the gentlemen who have protested against going back to their a b c's, as they term this review of the common branches, are holding their certificates, or will hold them, by virtue of my leniency and hopefulness that before the year is up they will be able to pass a creditable examination. You would be surprised, teachers, to know that 75 per cent of you could justly be refused a certificate, and the only reason I will not refuse you, is the fact that I have decided I can get you in the way of earning your certificates through these teachers' meetings. Now, personally, it makes no difference to me whether you earn your certificates, or whether I drop you from the roll by refusing to grant them on the poor work shown by your manuscripts, except as a matter of feelings. I would rather see you help yourselves to do better. I do my part by offering you this study and instruction throughout the year. Some of us make quite an ado about Saturdays being the only days we have to ourselves, and it ought not to be consumed in attending teachers' meetings; not even three hours on one Saturday out of the four we have in each school month. I do not have Saturdays to myself; neither does any other professional man, except those engaged in teaching. Clerks, lawyers, doctors, mechanics and laborers, all work from early morning till late in the day, six days

in the week. They would delight in a day's work that began at 9 o'clock and closed at 4 P. M., and have three and one-half Saturdays thrown in for good measure. Yet some of you get up here and complain of the extra three hours' work a month called for in this plan. Not only do you have all the spare time mentioned above, but fully half of your number do not use even a fraction of it to improve yourselves. You do not take a newspaper, or read a current book. Some of you have taught fifteen years in this county, and had all this spare time to yourselves, and are not, to this day, able to pass a satisfactory eighth grade examination. I tell you now that no such conditions will be tolerated another year. I have planned to wipe it out in one year, by your assistance, and at the end of that time it will be erased, either by your own acts, or by a stroke of the pen in the county superintendent's office. The rules must be obeyed. You have fair warning.

"We have been accustomed to doing just what we pleased in the past about such matters, and I believe some of us have not done well as a result of it. I even notice that some of you talk as though you did not care much what course the superintendent pursued; it would not affect you in the least, as you would act as you saw fit. It is true that you get that impression honestly from your experiences in the past, but I want to treat

you all honestly, and give you full notice of the policy of this office, so you will not have any trouble in adjusting your actions to the changed conditions. From this day on every teacher in Brush county will be guided in all such matters as attendance at teachers' meetings and kindred subjects, entirely by the directions sent out from this office. The teachers of Brush county will act as a unit. I shall not be compelled this year to beg, preach to and encourage teachers to attend these meetings, as I did last year. The reason is quickly given, and is simply because I shall take nothing but an absolute acquiescence in all requirements made of you. If there are any teachers who think they will be able to evade their duty, I shall at once revoke their certificates for insubordination. I adopt this vigorous policy because I am tired of begging you to do what you ought to do as a duty, and be delighted to do.

"Those who have opposed my plans need not fear that I shall feel any annoyance or enmity toward them for it. I asked for honest opinions. They gave me theirs, and I thank them for them. I want them to feel the same way about the matter, and take hold of this work with me with a will. No one ought to compel me to use that authority I possess to enforce my requirements.

"As to the adoption of this plan of work, it is entirely optional with this meeting. Whether

you adopt it or not, it will go on just the same, but it would please me greatly to know that the teachers of this county are in accord with this forward step, and in closing, I wish to say to you that I am doing my best to do the right thing. I may make mistakes, but I am going to follow out my own convictions. I hope you will always take me at my word, and not depend on my doing anything that is not consistent with what I have said here to-day. If you get into trouble because you have ignored the requirements made of you, then don't come and ask me to break the rules, so you can escape the penalty. I shall not vary one jot or tittle from the printed rules governing the conduct of teachers in relation to these monthly meetings."

He sat down. One of the most active teachers got up and enthusiastically endorsed the superintendent's position. He declared that Brush county was fifty years behind the times, simply because they had never had a superintendent who had the courage to go ahead and do what he thought he ought to do. He worked up the teachers to such a pitch of enthusiasm that even the old fossils stood up when a rising vote was called for, endorsing the superintendent's plans.

Thus a new leaf was turned, and Brush county began to go forward with great bounds.

XXIV.

All the gossip about the town as to whether Silas Cobb would succeed or fail, had ceased. He had passed beyond the point of probation, so far as the people were concerned. They had seen several examples of courage and firmness that secured for him the confidence of the best people. The teachers, too, began to understand that they all stood on the same footing. However, they were still in doubt as to the position Julia Howe held in the estimation of the superintendent. During the institute there was considerable gossip.

Miss Alger said to Miss Young one day: "I see Miss Julia Howe had to attend institute this year, like the rest of us."

"Don't you think it!" was Miss Young's retort. "Don't you see how she is always hanging around the superintendent's desk? She is always asking him for information on this and that, and smiling up in his face like a silly flirt. No sir, she just came here for no other reason than to be with Mr. Cobb. She's just struck on him, and you mark my words, she will get just what she wants. She will get the best certificate and best school in the county."

"Why, Miss Young, I am surprised at you. That is really an insult to Mr. Cobb, and I am

sure there can be nothing in your suspicions. He is just as fair and honorable as he can be, and you ought not to assume so much of which you are not positive."

"Assumption is it?" began Miss Young. "Well, you had better get posted. Hasn't she been caught in the superintendent's office a dozen times or more? Tell me why she should go there so often? Didn't Clay Green go up there one day and find her in the superintendent's back room in a nice little chat with him? Who knows what happens in there? Oh, I know Julia Howe! She thinks she is the only beauty on earth, and men have always made a fool of her. Why should Si Cobb be an exception?"

Miss Alger, not very aggressive at most, and not inclined to debate the subject further, simply said in her kind-hearted way: "She doesn't seem like she used to, though, Miss Young. You know she has studied very hard during the institute, and that is something she never did before."

"She is only hoodwinking Silas Cobb, that's all," replied Miss Young. "She is making him believe she has turned over a new leaf and is going to try to do something for herself. She has weighed the superintendent. He has a soft heart, and when he sees her working so hard he will give her another year to work up her grades if she falls short of the requirements, which she

is absolutely sure to do. Why, she doesn't know anything about books, and yet is able to make people believe she does. Pshaw! I have pupils in my school in the seventh grade who know more of arithmetic and grammar than she does. Whatever she gets, I am sure she will not earn, even if it is the poorest second grade certificate."

It will be seen from this conversation that Clay Green's visit was sufficient to start every gossipy tongue in the town to wagging.

There were eighty-six applicants for teachers' certificates at the examination held just before the institute closed, or rather, before the day the county association was organized. When the institute closed, Superintendent Cobb went to work grading the manuscripts. It was his first large examination, and the work of grading was slow and tedious. After a few days' work, it was apparent that a great many would fail to pass a satisfactory grade. One of the first manuscripts he graded was Miss Howe's. He was very anxious to know her fate at once. To his great sorrow, her standings were on an average below fifty per cent, and he was compelled to head the list of rejected applicants with her name. The list afterwards grew to great length.

Early on Tuesday morning, Julia Howe appeared at the threshold of the superinten-

dent's office, just as she had a few weeks before, as Silas was dusting his desk.

"Good-morning, Julia. There is one thing to your credit that I have noticed, which is very commendable; you are an early riser. How are you to-day?" He reached out and took her hand.

"I am well, thank you, Mr. Cobb, only I am terribly nervous, and I waited just as long as I could before coming, knowing you would not have had time to grade the papers before this, and possibly not now, but I just had to come. You are not done with them, are you?"

"No, indeed," said Silas. "It is a long task and I won't be through within two weeks."

At this Julia's countenance fell, and she looked very much disappointed.

"But," added Silas. "I have marked all your papers, Julia, and have your grades ready for you. I was so anxious about it I marked them first of all."

He handed her the sheet of paper showing the results of her examination. She took it with trembling hands, and eagerly scanned the list. Her face grew pale and her lips trembled. She looked up at Silas and said, in a voice scarce above a whisper, "I have failed, then?"

"It is true, Julia, and it hurts me very much. I was exceedingly anxious for you to pass, since you have worked so earnestly lately. I am sure

if you could go away to a normal school for a term or so you would be able not only to pass, but to make a most excellent teacher, with the other good traits of character you possess."

There was a silence between them. He was waiting for her to make some sort of comment, and she was unable to do so, apparently on account of the emotion she felt. The color came back to her cheeks, and finally she looked up at him, her eyes overflowing with tears. They dropped, unnoticed by her, on the paper she held in her hand. There was a forced smile on her trembling lips as she rose from her seat. She handed him back the paper already sprinkled with her tears, and held out her hands to him.

"It is all right, Silas, I don't blame you for it. I think you are a noble, brave, and honest man, and I admire you. I may be able to do something. Good-bye, and I hope you will remember me only as I have been these last few weeks. I did my very best, but I knew too little to begin with. I couldn't overcome the obstacles before me in so short a time. Somehow you have upset all my plans and changed the whole current of my life. Before you came into office I never knew a sad moment. I was at the top of everything. I succeeded somehow without effort. You came one day and I learned of my ignorance and folly. For some reason, when I was in your

presence I felt so mean, weak, and silly that it angered me. Gradually, I got over that, as I realized the great gap between us. You were everything a man ought to be. I was only one thing a woman ought to be. God gave me a good face and form, but all my life I had neglected to cultivate a mind to go with them. You pointed this out to me; not in words, but I felt it. The thoughts formed in my mind, just as if you had uttered them, and now that old spirit is broken, and I have begun to see things differently. Silas, I may have been frivolous beyond reason; I may have been over-pleasant to people that could help me, for I needed the help. As an excuse for it all, I wish you to know that I have been at the head of our family and its only support for the past four years. My little brothers had to be educated and the home kept up. All this I have been able to do, in spite of my ignorance and folly, for the people have spoiled me by being good to me beyond my deserts. What I hope for is that I may leave you knowing that I have regained your respect and confidence."

She paused for breath, and then seemed to forget what she was going to say, and a troubled look came over her countenance.

"Julia, you surprise me beyond measure. I could not have believed before now that you were

capable of such noble thoughts and unbiased judgment. You seem able to analyze your own character to the smallest detail. The spirit you show me to-day is worth all the wealth of the

"Give me your hands again, Julia, and let me congratulate you."

world. Give me your hands again, Julia, and let me congratulate and encourage you. I admire you more than you can know."

She stood there before him, tall, dark, beautiful, with a light, soft hand clasped in each of his, looking into his face. The pleasant words brightened her countenance, and put a warmth in her sparkling eyes. Her hands closed tightly on his, and a warm glow came into Silas' cheeks.

"Good-bye, Julia, and remember I am always ready to do everything I can for you."

The door closed, and Julia's light footsteps echoed down the old cob-webbed corridors.

XXV.

For a long time Silas sat at the window, gazing down at the sun-baked streets. One might have supposed he was gazing with interest on the human life stirring below. An old man on a rickety old wagon, with a pair of poor old horses, was driving by. He was barefooted, and costumed in a pair of overalls, undershirt and a straw hat. On the wagon was a few bunches of splits, made from young trees, and used in weaving bottoms in chairs, together with a few bushels of potatoes. He delivered the potatoes to the City Hotel, and re-bottomed several of the office chairs that had worn out. Silas sat watching the proceedings across the street. It is not recorded whether he was thinking of what he saw, or what he had felt an hour before. It is one of the blessings of man to be able to think without the world's knowing what he is thinking about. After an hour's reflection, not feeling capable of undertaking any serious task, he got up, closed the office, and went down to the hotel. He took a chair out on the shady side of the house, and sat down. Around the corner from where he sat, the old man was at work bottoming the chairs. Business was dull with Clay Green across the street, and spying

the old man at work, he walked over to gossip with him.

"Howdy, Caleb? Ye don't want t' work too hard in the hot of the day."

"Howdy, Caleb?" Ye don't want t' work too hard in the hot of the day."

The old man raised his head and spit a mouthful of tobacco juice square into the face of a sunflower some ten feet away, and said:

"Howdy."

He kept on working without another word.

"How's yer crap this year, Caleb?"

"Middlin'."

"What have ye been doin' these hot days?"

"Diggin' taters."

"Tater crap good?"

"Yep."

"How's Mis' Fisher?" (That's Caleb's wife.)

"Middlin'."

"Who's goin' t' teach yer school this year, Caleb?"

"Dunno."

"Who teached it las' year?"

"Julia Howe."

"How'd ye like her?"

"Middlin'."

"Did she behave herself?"

"Middlin', I reckon."

"Do ye want her agin?"

"Yep."

"What?"

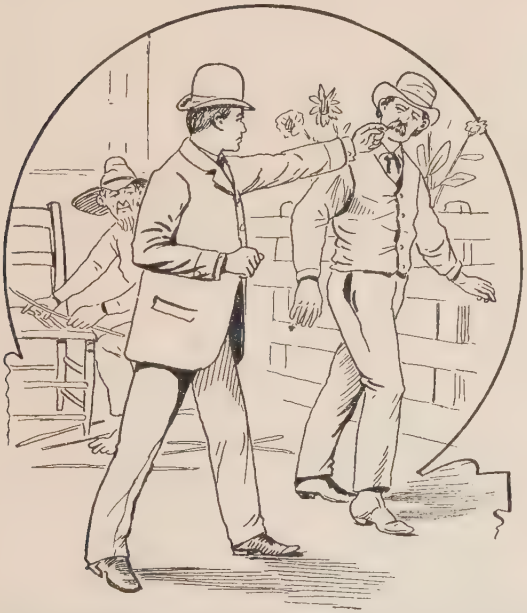
"Yep, I sed onct. Can't ye hear?"

"Hain't heard how she and Si Cobb's carryin' on, I reckon, or ye wouldn't want her."

"Carryin' on!

"Yes, carryin' on! Thought ye'd open yer eyes a little when a feller's trying to give ye a pinter. It's jest skanlus, the way that gal's goin' t' ruin. She jest come down from Si's office a

while ago, an' it's not the only time, nuther. Why, she's been a-goin' on this here way all summer, an' everybody's a-talkin' about 'em. It's a downright shame, Caleb, that honest men like you



"You just lied, didn't you, and I am going to teach you a lesson you will remember to your last day."

an' me have to look on to sich skanlus acts. I jest went up one mornin', when she wus there, t' see what wus goin' on, an' I saw 'nuff to make

my eyes bug out, I tell ye. I jest—" and then Silas Cobb came on the scene.

"You just lied, didn't you; and I am going to teach you a lesson you will remember to your last day. I will just take you by the nose *this way*, and I will just slap your face, *this way*. Then I will slap it on *this side*. Then I will cuff your ears *this way*, and *that*, and now I will stop long enough to ask you whether you think you can refrain from slandering respectable women? If not, I will proceed to cut a switch and give you a good thrashing. It's the only way to reach a wretch like you."

All this time the culprit was begging for mercy, declaring he had lied about him, and would never do so again, if he would let him off this time. He was so frightened he could scarcely get into his little shop across the street from weakness.

Old Caleb Fisher stood looking on in silence. When it was all over, Silas turned to him and spoke:

"How do you do, Mr. Fisher? I am very sorry to come into your presence and disturb your peace of mind by such actions, but it was a duty."

The old man puckered up his mouth and fired another shot at the sunflower before he spoke, and then came very near forgetting what he was going to say when he saw his shot went wide of the mark, and only struck the lower petals of the

blossom. Perhaps Silas' activity had unnerved him so his aim was not true.

"Ye did middlin' well," he replied.

"I don't know about that, Mr. Fisher, but I do know that Clay Green is a traducer of character. He wastes half his time sitting at that window watching the people of this town, and his dirty mind befouls everything it thinks about. The only thing on earth that will help him is just the treatment I have administered."

The old man went on bottoming the chairs, now and then taking a shot at the sunflowers by way of diversion.

The sun-baked sidewalk sent up little quivers of heat, and the dust, at every gust of wind, was sent flying everywhere. Silas went back to his office, and in the space of ten minutes the scene was as peaceful and quiet as before.

XXVI.

For several days after the incidents related in the preceding chapter, Silas Cobb pored over examination papers. The task was a laborious one, and when it was finished he felt a sense of great relief. Had he known what a storm of abuse would be heaped upon him as a result of the long list of applicants he had marked with the fatal word "failed," he probably would have anticipated the future with considerable dread, beside which the sense of relief from having finished the task of grading would seem insignificant.

He had just finished tabulating the results, and was preparing to mail to each applicant a report of her examination, when Miss Cora Langly called to receive hers in person. She was greatly agitated, and very anxious to know the result. Silas greeted her cordially, and when she had stated her mission, he replied:

"Why, certainly, I will look over the list, Miss Langly, and give you your report at once." He knew she had failed, but it wasn't in his heart to tell her so outright, knowing how the blow would affect her, so he hunted among the loose papers on his desk for the fatal list that lay right before his eyes, and chatted in a light vein as he looked.

Finally he found it, and his face took on a serious look, as if he were acquiring new information that pained him very much, and said: "Miss Langly, I am very sorry to report that you have failed. I am sorry, because it will be harder for you to bear since you have already held a certificate, and taught school at least one year, and because you are known to me as a conscientious, hard worker. But it is impossible to make much headway in this great work of reviving the schools unless we raise the standard of teachers. Therefore, many of you will have to take a few terms at some good school and better fit yourselves for the work. When you have done that, come back to me and get your place among us. I shall be the first to welcome you, and help you to a position."

Miss Langly, looking thin and careworn, stared straight ahead at the dingy old wall of the office that had probably witnessed many scenes just as pathetic long before the present occupants were born, and made no reply. Silas was silent also, and there was not a sound in the room save the rattling now and then of crumbs of plaster from the old walls. One can't stare forever at the blank wall without doing or saying something, and the thing Miss Langly did was very much like her sex. After a few preliminary twitches of the lips, she burst into tears. That was all

there was to it. To her it was tragical. Perhaps it was her only means of a livelihood. Probably she had others depending on her for bread as well. To a man like Silas Cobb, whose heart was as warm as the south wind, these scenes were very trying. He felt with them all the pain they suffered, and were it not for his well-grounded sense of justice, his sympathies would have ruled his mind, and the country schools would have floundered along helplessly another decade under the direction of incompetent teachers.

Miss Langly had barely left the room when another type of applicant appeared on the scene. She came in with an air of considerable importance—as one who was aware of her power and the influence of her family. She had no doubt these points of superiority over such as Miss Langly, who was without family influence, would be considered by the superintendent very favorably.

She looked amazed when quietly informed that she had failed to pass a satisfactory examination.

"Why, that is ridiculous, Mr. Cobb,"—and the thought of it made her angry—"why I know I have passed, and you have not graded my papers right." Her attitude became more hostile, and finally she said: "My father told me you were making a lot of the teachers fail, but he said if you cut me out you would be defeated for a second

term, and I hope you will be, too, so there, now. You—"

"Excuse me, Miss Joy, I fear you have permitted your very bad temper to do you a great injury. It will take a long time for you to undo what you have done within the last few minutes At the present time you are no more fit to teach school than a child, no matter what your standings on examination might be. A teacher should be, first of all things, a perfect lady. That means a great deal. It will take you a long time to master the qualifications requisite to those who attempt to direct the growth of a child's mind. Come back to me when you are ready to apologize for your conduct, and I will show you your papers and point out your failings to you. Till then I bid you good-day."

She withdrew, slightly frightened, but still resentful.

A half hour later Silas heard heavy footsteps on the stairs, and he felt sure it was Mr. Joy, whom he well knew to have been one of his strongest supporters during the campaign. It gave him no little pain to know he was under obligations to him, and was repaying him with what seemed to Mr. Joy the rankest kind of ingratitude. But Silas Cobb was too firm to be skaken from the true course by contrary winds.

Mr. Joy entered the office in a perfect rage. It

seemed to him, in his ignorance, that he had just cause for being in that condition.

"My gal has jest told me you won't give her a

"Mr. Joy entered the office in a perfect rage."

certificate, and I want to know mighty blamed quick why you won't, do you hear? Didn't I run all over the county gittin' votes fer you, and didn't

I git you the office? And here you pay me fer it by refusin' my child a certificate. The Professor has issued her two, and she has teached a year already. You've jest simply got too d—— smart, Silas, that's the size of it, and I want to tell you so to your face."

During this storm of big talk Silas sat looking him in the eye, as quietly as if he were telling him of the condition of his health. There was not a trace of emotion in his face, and his eyes were so penetrating that Mr. Joy began to feel uncomfortable, and to doubt the justice of his cause. So it was with almost everybody who came in contact with Silas Cobb. To look in his eyes was to believe him honest to the core. Mr. Joy glanced furtively at Silas, and finished by saying, in a conciliatory tone of voice, "Of course, I may be mistaken, Silas, and I jest come in to see you about it, knowin' you would do me the right thing, seein' that I stood by you in time of need."

"Now that last is better, Mr. Joy, and I am glad that you feel that you did me an injustice by coming into my office in such a temper. Your daughter has just left me and I am very sorry to be compelled to relate to you that she acted so badly, even worse than you did, that I could not issue her a certificate if she made the top mark in every branch. I am going to say to

you frankly, Mr. Joy, that I blame you for it all. You taught the girl those ugly ways, and led her to believe that you owned me, and that she would be favored, standings or no standings. You see, you have done the girl a great injury. I am doing my best for the school children of this county, and that means I am doing my best for your children. Your daughter made an average of only 55 per cent, fully 20 per cent short of the required standing."

"Well, what difference does that make, Silas, 'tween you and me? Ain't we stood tergether in politics, and why in blazes can't you fix her up a certificate, anyhow? It's jest 'tween us, you know."

"That is true, Mr. Joy; it is just between us, and it is none the less dishonest because you propose it to be between us. Why should you ask me to lower in your case the standard for the qualification of teachers which, as it is, is none too high, and thereby do an injustice to every other teacher in the county, and, at the same time, force upon the people a teacher who is not competent? You never think of asking a grain dealer to take your corn at forty pounds to the bushel and pay you the same price he would Henry Boggs for his corn at fifty-six pounds to the bushel? Of course you don't, and no one else does. It is only with this office, apparently, that people think they can

get full measure for half measure, in case they have a "pull." But it can't be done on that principle while I am in office. The candidate who cannot fill the standard measure is labeled "short," and that absolutely ends it until the shortage is made good. The only excuse you have for making such a request of me is on the ground that you supported me during the campaign. I am aware that you did support me, but I did not know your motive at the time or I should have told you to support the other man. I thought you were supporting me because you had made up your mind that I would better serve your school, and the people at large. I see now you did not expect that, but wanted me elected, thinking I could be induced to serve your personal ends, even to the detriment of the schools. Now, to do you justice, Mr. Joy, you did not mean to injure a soul, for at heart I actually believe you to be an honest man, but the fact remains that your actions brand you as being dishonest. This I lay to the fact that you have not thought much about anyone's interest but your own. You did not think of your neighbor's children, or even your own, being injured for life by an incompetent teacher. You have not studied that subject so much as you have others, which accounts for your opinions not being well founded."

"That's pretty hard, Silas," replied Mr. Joy.

"I never yet had a man talk that way to me, but seems like I don't feel so very mad about it. It is a fact; I never thought about it bein' any injury to children. Don't know jest how the gal is goin' to injure a child jest a-teachin' it to read, write and figger, but I am willin', that bein' out o' my line, to leave it with you, Silas."

"You are a breeder of fine stock, Mr. Joy, and a successful one, too, for I have seen your fine, well-broken horses, and your well-kept grounds and buildings. Everything about your place is ideal. I have never seen a better kept farm than yours. As to your stock, you have a horse so well trained that one almost expects to hear him talk. You will remember you had him do his tricks one day for me. When you were training that horse you would not have thought of letting Jim, your hired man, handle him. He would have ruined him in a day. Isn't that so?"

"To be sure it is, Silas," replied Mr. Joy, enthusiastically, and in good humor now. "You jest hit the nail on the head. Talkin' about trainin' horses, there ain't one man in a thousand that kin do it. Why, shucks! do you know, I won't let Jim drive any of my blooded horses? He'd ruin 'em, sure. Yes sir, that's a fact. I kin train a horse, and as to keepin' up the place, I am all right on that, too."

"That is surely in your line, Mr. Joy," replied

Silas, "for I never saw anything better done anywhere, and your success with horses shows the value of skilled trainers. You never could have made that horse an intelligent animal if you had not been a trained horseman. It is exactly the same in training children. With a skilled teacher, a child is developed into a beautiful creature, and with an unskilled teacher he develops into a mentally deformed one."

"Silas," replied Mr. Joy, "you hit me that time, and I acknowledge you have given me a good hard lick, too, and I furnished you the club. That's a good one on me. Why, confound me! anybody could see that all right. You've got to have trained horsemen to make good horses, and the same is true of teachers, of course. Say, Silas, I see you air right, and I am wrong, and if you will fergit the past I will, and we will start in new; you a trainin' teachers and me a trainin' horses. But, doggone me, if I don't go right home and teach that gal some manners. She ort to knowed better'n to act up that-a-way."

"That is all right, Mr. Joy. It does me good to hear you talk that way. I always knew your heart was right."

Silas was very successful in shaking people loose from wrong ideas by telling them of their faults, but he always knew enough to point out their virtues to them, so as not to jar them too

violently. Thus, he did two good things, encouraged their good traits and discouraged their bad ones.

XXVII.

The entire week was given up to the reception of applicants who had received notices of failure to pass the examination. They came in singly, by twos, threes, and sometimes, it seemed to Silas, by droves. Those who were not in tears, as a rule were in open rebellion. They declared such high-handed outrages had never before been committed on an unsuspecting people.

On Saturday morning Mr. Avery, a very smooth-tongued gentleman from the village of Adkins, called on Mr. Cobb. He wanted a private interview, and when shown into Silas' little private room, he began at once:

"Say, Silas, do you know you are making a fool of yourself, my boy? I took you to be a pretty keen fellow, and never dreamed you would turn on your own supporters. I don't think you ungrateful, Silas, but I do think you are on the wrong track. Mr. Johnson, Sam Johnson—you know who I mean—was over to see me last night, and he told me you had refused his girl, Sarah, a certificate. I was simply astonished when he told me, for I knew that you were aware that he worked for you in the campaign, day and night, for two weeks before election. Besides, his girl has taught one term, and holds a certificate from

Littleman. I didn't just see why you should do a fool thing like that, and told Johnson so. It seems to me, since we have elected you to office, you ought to, at least, not make open war on your friends. So I have come up especially to hear what you have to say about it."

Silas listened patiently and very attentively till he had finished, and then he said: "Mr. Avery, I am very glad you have come to me. It shows that you are at least ready to get at the root of things at once, before you express your opinion too freely on the outside. Now, let us take up Miss Johnson's case at the beginning. She took the examination here and made an average of 52 per cent on a list of questions that were very simple and practical. She could neither read nor spell respectably, nor even solve a problem in compound numbers. She had never had any schooling outside of a very poor country school. I honestly decided she could not possibly teach a school. It would be an outrage to the long-suffering people to impose on them in such a manner. Her father called here with her, and I showed them her papers. They seemed satisfied she had been honestly treated. I told them it would not do to issue a certificate on those grades. I understand now, from you, that he was not satisfied, but has gone to you, knowing you to be one of my warmest friends, and asked you

to come to me and intercede for his daughter for him. Am I right, Mr. Avery?"

"Yes, he did ask me if I could do anything for him, and I told him I would see," replied Mr. Avery.

"Well, you are not the only prominent citizen I have had call on me on similar errands. The naked proposition, then, is this: I have refused Miss Johnson a certificate. She brought her father to see me again, and I refused the second time to grant it. They seek an influential neighbor, whom I admire very much, and send him to see me, hoping that, with his political influence and friendship, he might get what they failed to get. In other words, they assume that I am both a fool and a knave. What respect could you have for me? What respect could Mr. Johnson and his daughter have, knowing that I could be influenced by political friends to do to-day what I refused to do yesterday, while the evidence that guided me remained the same? I can't blow north to-day and south to-morrow, Mr. Avery, without some very good reasons for it. But I want to ask you a question now, and I believe you will answer it frankly: Did you ever know a man occupying this position who would reverse his decisions simply because a friend wanted him to do so?"

"Yes, I have."

"What did you think of him, Mr. Avery? Honestly, now."

"Oh, he was a pretty good fellow, I guess."

"Well, now, tell me how far you would trust him."

Mr. Avery looked up and smiled. "Say, Silas," he said, "you are all right. I like you for your fearless, straightforward course. In short, I don't mind saying to you that you make me half ashamed of myself. You see, we have been so used to that sort of thing we haven't thought about how it really did look from an honest man's point of view. I am just as glad as I can be to see you take that position. You were not elected to serve the leading Democrats of this county, but the people, and I thought when you were talking, how really incompetent that girl is, and how I would dislike to have her teach my children. I remembered then that she had been teaching a term or so, and somebody had to suffer for it. I am really thankful to you for calling my attention to this evil. While I am a politician, yet I think I am sufficiently honest, if I know what is right, not to injure my neighbors."

The afternoon's mail brought Silas a letter, which read as follows:

My Dear Sir: Will you please inform me whether or not Miss Julia Howe received a certifi-

cate? I will consider your reply entirely confidential. Yours truly,

HENRY JAMES, Postmaster.

This Mr. James was postmaster at Fairfax, a gossipy little village, where Miss Howe had taught one year, and Silas felt certain nothing but curiosity and envy prompted the query. So far, no one knew whether Miss Howe had failed or passed, and all her acquaintances were almost consumed with curiosity in regard to it. Silas replied like this:

DEAR MR. JAMES: Your letter of inquiry regarding Miss Howe's record of examination is just at hand. In reply, I desire to say to you, without any intent of offering you offense, that you can, no doubt, get your question satisfactorily answered by addressing Miss Howe, personally, on the subject. Unless you are a school officer, and you are officially in need of the information, I shall remain silent on the subject. This office does not consider it in the range of duty to satisfy mere curiosity on a subject that concerns no one but Miss Howe herself. Yours truly,

SILAS COBB.

P. S. As a second thought, I have decided to send your letter to Miss Howe for her to do with as she sees fit.

Mr. Cobb then mailed to Miss Howe a copy of his letter to Mr. James, together with the James letter. It is safe to say that Miss Howe shed a few tears of gratitude over this silent evidence of protection Silas saw fit to afford her. While

he did it as a matter of principle, he felt it would show her he had no prejudices.

Mr. Henry James had a few sparks of manhood left in him, and when he received Superintendent Cobb's letter, he was chagrined to think his wife, who had induced him to write to Silas, would get him into such a humiliating position. He took the letter home to his wife at once, and they quarreled about it. Neither of them expected to get a reply from Miss Howe, and it never occurred to them, even if she did reply, that she would tell them the truth about it. To the great surprise of Henry James, he received a letter from Miss Howe which disturbed him greatly. If he were humiliated when he received Silas Cobb's letter, he might properly be classed among the crushed when he received hers. He wrote her a pathetic apology, and told her he would not breathe a word of the contents, etc., and he kept it from his wife for at least one week. The following is her letter:

August, 1, 188 -.

Mr. Henry James, Fairfax, Ill.

Dear Sir: Superintendent Cobb has kindly sent me your letter of inquiry as to the result of my examination, and foot-noted it, saying I should answer it or not, as I saw fit. I have decided to answer it, and I am sure you and your friends will be delighted to know that I have failed to pass the required standard. Why you should be, God only knows, for I have never injured any of

you in my life, and I frankly give this information, knowing that it will give you pleasure, and that you will use it to my injury.

I assure you I hold you no ill-will.

Yours very truly,

JULIA HOWE.

Mrs. James and a few other ladies of the town had been very envious of Miss Howe, and had never let an opportunity pass to criticize her. Her beauty and social qualities had drawn to her most of the better element of the town, and this was gall and wormwood to Mrs. James. As before stated, Mr. James, being a weak man, was able to keep the secret a full week before Mrs. James caused the culprit to divulge it. Then she compelled him to tell her how long he had kept the news from her. When she found he had carried the letter a week, she grew very angry, and accused him of too much intimacy with that *thing*. She then hurried through her dinner, and without washing the dishes, dressed, and went calling that afternoon on all of her friends, and almost "walked her legs off" getting around to them all to spread the precious news. How she did enjoy it! One of the strangest things in this wide, wicked old world is the keen enjoyment one woman gets in rending another.

XXVIII.

From day to day Silas Cobb had inquiries, both by mail and in person, from people who desired to know if such and such a one had passed. To all these questions Silas had the good sense to make the same reply, in substance, as that addressed to Henry James. He gave a good many lessons in ethics to people in that trying month of August. They came to him before breakfast, then all forenoon at the office. They interrupted his noon hour, and harrassed him all afternoon; then after supper he was besieged at the hotel until bedtime. Papas, mammas, sisters, brothers, politicians and school boards—all requesting him to reverse his decisions, and issue certificates to favorites who had failed. This poor girl had her mother to support, and that one had already contracted for her school. Another one had been promised such a small school, there would be no trouble in her teaching it. She didn't need to know much. The people wanted her, and why should he care? Some grew angry and threatened him with defeat at the next election. Others were satisfied with his explanations, while still others were passive. In this manner Silas spent the hot month of August, and fought a battle against as great odds as is seldom the misfortune of any

man to meet. Yet few, if any, of his constituents realized, or even appreciated at the time, the great service he was rendering the county, as he stood there alone, with no sympathy or encouragement, fighting for the rights of the little boys and girls, and sometimes it seemed to him that the very people he was fighting for were in sympathy with the enemy. There were times when his spirit seemed ground into the earth, after a trying day with school officers and politicians, and, sitting alone in his room at night, by the ill-smelling oil lamp, doubt would creep into his heart, and he would ask himself whether he shouldn't give it all up, and go back to old Mr. Boggs,' where he had always been at peace. Perhaps, after all, he had been too hard on the would-be teachers. Then the faces of those who had gone down amidst the ruins of the fatal examination would pass in review before him. There was Miss Howe, tall and beautiful, standing before him again, and he could recall every word she had said to him, and it seemed now in the silence of the night, that they came from a broken spirit. He sighed, and his mind ran back to the barefoot time of his youth, and meadows, orchards, cornfields, and a little slip of a girl, were there before him. He even smelled the clover blossoms, and could hear the buzz of the bumble-bee. Yes, even Julia, the girl he had played with that June

day in the long ago, he had cast down with the others from a place she had long since reached. Yet, after all, did he not do right, and had he not suffered greatly, too, in doing it? But it was too

"His mind ran back to the barefoot time of his youth."

late to change his course if he would, for, as he said to Mr. Avery, he could not blow north to-day and south to-morrow without grave reasons for it.

His thoughts reverted to Superintendent Ed

Smith. The thought of this impulsive, yet extraordinary man, made him wish to see him at once. It would be a comfort to talk it over with him, so he promised himself a holiday, and on the following morning he went over to see his neighbor, and was greeted with an informality that was refreshing.

"Why hello, Silas, you dear old cub, how are you, anyway? Mighty glad to see you, my boy," and he pulled Silas into a chair beside his desk.

"I am not feeling very happy, Mr. Smith, and that is why I am here," Silas replied. "I have spent a month in purgatory, and I have come over to see if you know a way out of the place, or, if not, to get as much encouragement from you as possible, for I tell you honestly, I am very much discouraged."

"Good gracious, boy, you look as if you had come home to die. What's the trouble? Haven't run you out of the county, have they?"

"No, not so bad as that, but I am harrassed very nearly to death by the friends of wrecked school teachers."

Superintendent Smith leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily. He was a man as indifferent to a frown as any one could be, and it amused him to see Silas wearing such a long face over so small a matter. So he proceeded to give his idea of the situation.

"Silas, you may not know it, but you are a pioneer, and you are right now making the first clearing. That county is as dark as Egypt, and

"Superintendent Smith leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily."

the people never had a county superintendent before. The *things* that have been in office over

there were not county superintendents at all. No one who knew anything about supervision ever honored them by that name. They simply imposed on the people, and licensed every sort of individual who came along to teach school. True, it is a sad commentary on the intelligence of the people. But how should they know? They had nothing to compare their superintendents with. All they ever had were ground out of the same grist. No matter what Littleman did, right or wrong, if any one came up and kicked about it, he would undo his work at once. So you see the people have grown used to having every whim gratified, whether it hurt the county at large or not. When you came into office they expected you to be like your predecessors. I have kept track of you, and knew what was coming. I knew you would have to fight it out with them at once and win or your work would be a flat failure. Don't I know by experience what it is? Did I not have the same battle to fight over here? The only difference between us is, I enjoyed the fight, and I see you are in tears at what you consider is the ruin you have wrought. But don't you worry. Your fight is over, and if you stand firm you will never have any more trouble. People will learn that you cannot be moved, once honestly decided. They will fall into line and take your rulings as a matter of fact, and never think of coming up to

influence you to change them. Those who fail will not call to trouble you about it, but take it for granted that they have failed for good and valid reasons."

"Your words," said Silas, "picture very clearly the far-reaching influence of a county superintendent, even though he be a very weak man. We usually consider, if a man be weak, his influence is very small in any direction, but I can see that in the case of a county superintendent it is different. It would seem that his very weakness causes a train of evil that could never be equalled in extent by the good done by a strong, conscientious man. His weakness throws down the bars to all sorts of impositions. The people not only suffer incalculable loss by having incompetent teachers thrust upon them, but the dignity and integrity that should be attached to the office is dragged down into the dirt. In the meantime people have learned to look upon the office as a thing that can be bought and sold for political preference or even money. God knows it's a difficult thing to break down long-established precedent, though it is based on false premises, and rotten to the core."

"That is true," replied Mr. Smith. "Precedent is everything to an old community. It is a clog to progress, and a cover for incompetency and often fraud. Anything new is frowned down

unless a strong hand is at the helm. An old wrong can be perpetrated on the people time and again, simply because they are used to it. Try to correct it and you have to fight. Hundreds of honest men are elected to office every year, and they begin work with high aspirations and an ambition to do the right thing for the people. In the first efforts they make along these worthy lines they meet with the opposition of some one who is affected by the new move, and he at once brings his influence to bear on the office. If that isn't enough to stop him, he gets all his friends to help him, and the end, usually, is that the men who are holding public trust defer to private interests. So these men who meant to go right and do right, find themselves conforming to the natural law, and they move along the line of least resistance. 'What's the use,' they think, 'of going against the people? If they want me to do this way, why need I care? Am I not their servant, and ought I not to do as they wish me to do?'

"So they argue themselves into believing that they are doing right, and that these self-interested people who protest against their acts are the whole people. They are willing to do as they, the interested voters, want them to. Why? Because the remainder of the voters don't care a rap. Most public officers are like a schoolma'am I

heard of over in Superintendent Slowly's county. She had been foolishly teaching that the world was round, to the chagrin of the school board and most of the patrons. When she was called up before the indignant school board, and an explanation of her degeneracy demanded, she frankly abjured her theory of the rotundity of the earth's shape, and told them she would henceforth hold to the pancake idea; thus she avoided a conflict with authority.

"Silas, I am a firm believer in the predomination of the good, always providing, however, that a good man is at the helm to help out in a pinch. And I'll tell you another thing, too, that I believe in. The harder you try to hold an office, term after term, the less liable you are to succeed. A fellow gets to catering to this and that, and makes a perfect ass of himself, and the people gradually catch on to the fact. That is, a few of them do, and they tell their thicker-headed brothers about it. So, in time, he loses his job. On the other hand, here is what has happened to me. I came into this office practically under protest. I had a good place, and didn't need this one. Well, I was independent, and I took some pleasure in telling a few fellows who tried to dictate the policy of the office, with a threat of defeat for a second term, that I didn't care a rap for their support; I was only serving

the people by special request, and would be glad to quit any time they got tired of my services. Then I would laughingly ask them if they had a message from the people to me to that effect. So things went on that way, and gradually it became a well-known fact among the people that I didn't particularly care for the office. When some one would raise the question about my wanting a second election, there was always some fellow there to say, 'Well, you can't work no bluff on him; he doesn't care a snap for the office, and wouldn't turn his hand over for it.' Strange as it may seem, the perversity of human nature makes men do things by contraries. There's quite sure to be another fellow in the crowd who is also an independent lance, and he naturally admires a fearless man, but he rather likes to force things himself, so he says: "That's just the kind of a man we want—some one who is not afraid to act fearlessly on any subject that may arise, for fear he might lose a vote or two. You know what sort of an administration I have had over here. It has been as cold-blooded, so far as hewing to the line is concerned, as anything could be. I felt sure when I started out that one term would be sufficient to give the people a surfeit of me. What's the result? I couldn't get off making a second campaign, and I had more votes than ever. I account for it largely on the ground that

the ordinary man, when not personally interested, likes to see a public office run vigorously and honestly. He gets sore if he sees that an officer can be managed by some neighbor of his with whom he is not on good terms. In fact, all the Republican voters I lost last year, on account of having had to sit on them some time or other during my term, were counter-balanced by their envious Democratic neighbors, who thought I was a man of great discernment. They had had to sit on these same fellows long ago, and it pleased them to know I endorsed their act, apparently."

The more they discussed the matter the better Silas felt. He could not help feeling with his constituents every disappointment they felt, but this talk with Superintendent Smith braced him up, and he felt better about it. He was sure he was right, but one needs sympathy and encouragement when facing trials, great or small. A lot of small trials are more wearing, too, than a few large ones.

Silas went home full of determination to fight it out along the lines he had laid down.

The experiences that Superintendent Cobb met with are common in all counties where the superintendent follows a similar course, and has been preceded in office by a man like Professor Littleman. In many counties, at the present time, such

conditions are unknown, for the simple reason that there has been a long line of strong men in office, each adding to the strength and virtue of the work done by his predecessor. In such a county few people aspire to be teachers who have not had considerable preparation, and if they fail to pass, that ends the matter.

XXIX.

That afternoon when Silas got back to his office he had a call from Caleb Fisher. That gentleman came in, deeply absorbed in something, and as Silas' greeting brought him back to the earth again, he found it necessary to take a turn around the room once, and not finding a spittoon in sight he passed out into the hall. No man, even though he be as brief as Caleb Fisher, could handle his tongue submerged in a pint, more or less, of tobacco juice. He came back into the office ready for business. Life was a serious matter with Caleb. He never smiled nor said an extra word if he could avoid it. "Howdy." This was in answer to Silas' former greeting. He always took everything in courses, and did one thing at a time.

"What can I do for you to-day, Mr. Fisher?"

"Want t' git a teacher."

"Oh!" replied Silas.

"Yep."

"Whom do you want?"

"Julie Howe."

"Oh!" (This time rather surprised.)

"I don't think you can get her, Mr. Fisher."

Why?"

"Don't think she is going to teach this year."

"Why?"

"She has not told me, but I think I am right."

"We want her any how!"

"I have another teacher I can send you though, Mr. Fisher."

"Don't want any other."

"I fear you can't get Miss Howe."

"She asked me fer the school."

"When?"

"Las' spring."

"Oh! that's quite different now."

"Why?"

"Well, Mr. Fisher, I see you are a warm friend and believer in Miss Howe, and I am glad of it. You are a school officer and have a right to know why you can't get her. She has failed to pass the examination."

Caleb got up and took another turn around the room, and making sure for the second time no spittoon was to be found, he put his head out of the open window and aimed at a wheelbarrow in the yard below. He looked pleased when he came back to his seat, so Silas assumed that he hit his mark. He sat down, and after due reflection said:

"Oh!"

"Yes," replied Silas, "and I am very sorry. She is a good girl."

"Middlin'."

"You like her as a teacher very much, I suppose?"

"Middlin'."

"Do you want the other teacher I mentioned to you?"

"Middlin'—oh—I mean—er—what did ye say?"

"Do you want Miss Young, the other teacher I told you about?"

"I reckon."

"All right; when shall I tell her to come?"

"Nex' week—Monday."

"All right, Mr. Fisher, I will send her out." He vouchsafed no reply, but stalked out and down the stairs.

Silas would have given a great deal to know what was in his heart. Caleb Fisher was a philosopher, and although he went about looking like a tramp, he was wise, or passed as being so, far beyond his neighbors.

When Caleb hired Miss Young, the people were very much surprised, for they had all expressed a preference for "Julie" Howe, as they all called her. Caleb only answered their inquiries with the brief statement, "Can't git her," and that ended it. No one ever attempted to cross-examine Caleb Fisher. Silas wondered if the old man would give the reason for his failure, and was pleased to learn

later that he had not. He evidently understood that he had forced Silas to give his reason, and from that fact reasoned that Silas wanted it kept a secret. Or he might have understood that it would injure Miss Howe's reputation as a teacher. At any rate he kept all reflections on the subject to himself.

XXX.

On a bright September morning Silas started out on a tour of inspection, or visits, according to the current vernacular, to the different schools of the county. He drove out to old Henry Boggs' home in time for dinner, and was met by Mr. Boggs at the barn-yard gate, where it became that worthy gentleman's duty to club away the irrepressible swine, as Silas had done on that notable evening of the day Mr. Boggs had made his speech before the committee. "Howdy, Silas! I'm mighty glad t' see ye, son. Drive right in now an' git out—dad drat them plagued hogs! Now come on, quick! Burn me ef I don't pen up these shoats an' git rid uv 'em. Been lettin' 'em run out t' git a little mast along the crick bottoms."

"Mr. Boggs," said Silas, after the fight with the *"razor-backs" ended and the gate was closed, "I couldn't resist coming out for a little visit with you and Mrs. Boggs. Just want to visit with you some for old time's sake, you know."

*The breed of hogs around Mr. Boggs' gate is common to southern Illinois and Indiana, especially Indiana. It is a native of the soil, and resembles it in quality. It is usually poor and hungry and its long snout and thin appearance accounts for its nickname of "razor-back." In some localities it is called "elm-peeler"—just why is not known, unless it arose from its marvelous ability as a rooter or "peeler" of the meadows—suggested probably by the native boys who enjoy chewing slippery-elm bark, which they peel from the young trees.

"That's right, Silas, my boy; ye don't want t' fergit the old folks. We've been a wishin' ye'd come out fer some time back. Wanted t' know how ye've been gittin' on, too."

Then followed a long talk, in which Silas related all his experiences with his examinations and politicians. Mr. Boggs listened with many exclamations of surprise, but when Silas ceased, the old man did not seem to be quite satisfied—something had been omitted which he wanted to hear about, so he said; "Silas, ye hain't said a word 'bout Julie Howe. How be that young lady now, an' is it a fact ye've refused her a certi-fi-kate?"

"Yes," replied Silas, "I had to do it, I thought, and some how, Mr. Boggs, I feel rather badly about it. There seems to be something about it that troubles my conscience. If she had remained like she was at the beginning, thoughtless and frivolous, I should not feel that I had made a mistake, but she has changed so completely, and seems so serious and earnest, and even frank to admit her weakness, that I don't know whether, after all, she should not have been given another chance. But the deed is done and cannot be recalled, right or wrong. What do you think about it, Mr. Boggs?"

"Miss Alger wus over here las' week an' wus a tellin' Mrs. Boggs 'bout how Julie had gone off

t' school an' how she wus diff'rent from what she wus," said Mr. Boggs, "an' blame me! Silas, I feel 'bout like you. The gal shorely shows lots uv sense an' energy, from what Miss Alger told me an' my ole woman."

"Is it a fact that she has gone away to school, Mr. Boggs?" asked Silas.

"It shorely is, Silas, fer Miss Alger told us that her cousin lives next door t' Widder Howe, an' she got the news from one uv Julie's little brothers. He said they had a mighty hard time gittin' the money, too, an' do ye know, Si, I jest wanted t' go an' see that gal an' offer t' loan her 'nuff money t' gradeate her at school. Blamed ef I didn't! But Miss Alger says they's mighty proud, an' it's not shore they would borrow when they have nothin' in sight t' pay back with. Julie an' her ma don't seem t' tell their troubles, an' nothin' is knowed about it, 'ceptin' what the boy told. Si, do ye think ye could manage t' tell her when ye see her agin that old Boggs would be mighty glad t' loan her some money t' pay her schoolin' 'thout interest, an' she could pay it back when she got back teachin' agin?"

"That's not a bad idea, Mr. Boggs, but if she is away it will probably be a long time before either of us could see her. Besides, I have no idea just how I could present the matter to her.

It is rather a delicate subject, yet I do heartily approve of your generous motive."

"Shucks, Si, don't need t' mention it t' me. Me'n the old woman's got 'nuff t' do us longer'n we'll ever be needin' it. 'Sides, it'd be helpin' the gal t' git edicated."

That afternoon Silas visited Miss Josephine Alger's school in No. 6. She was probably as good as any teacher in country school work in southern Illinois. When Silas drove up to the schoolhouse he was impressed with the general appearance of the grounds. Everything looked neat and carefully kept. There were young trees, with here and there a bunch of shrubbery, and along by the schoolhouse wall was a bed of pansies. There were no broken sticks and boards lying around in the playground.

When Silas stepped into the little hall and cloak-room, he found the same neatness displayed there. Instead of an indiscriminate mass of wraps, caps, dinner pails, etc., that is a common sight in the average school cloak-room, there was a neat row of caps and bonnets, and above them a long shelf covered with newspapers with scalloped edges, on which the dinner pails were placed. The pile of rubbish ordinary to such places was missing.

On entering the schoolroom proper, he found a bright, cheery prospect before him. In a

window standing in the sunshine were two or three geraniums in bloom. On the teacher's desk was a bouquet of pansies from the bed by the side of the schoolhouse. Here and there on the walls were simple and appropriate decorations. Everything looked cheerful and cozy. The floor was clean from many scrubbings, and the almost ever-present schoolroom dust could scarcely be detected any where. It was a lovely room, though simple, and the delightful autumn breezes came quivering through a yellow cornfield near by, through the mullein stalks and golden rods of the parched pasture lands, and on through the open windows, laden with the breath of ripening corn and the song of the cricket, shedding blessings on the happy children and teacher. The effect of these beautiful surroundings and the influence of a loving heart on that school were apparent at a glance. The pupils were clean and well-mannered, and did not stare Silas out of countenance, as pupils are wont to do.

"How have you been able to make your surroundings so delightful, Miss Alger?" said Silas, after his first greeting. He spoke in a tone of voice that reached every pupil in the schoolroom. Miss Alger blushed at this, and it seemed to wipe out the lines of care that time had placed in her face, and Silas wondered why he had always thought her plain.

"I can scarcely tell you, Mr. Cobb," she said, "unless you will take the plain statement that we just simply did it with our hands. It isn't much to do. Any one can do it. In truth, you must not credit me with doing it, but rather these boys and girls here. They scrub this floor every other night, and dust every nook and corner every day. You see it is easy when I have some one to do the work for me."

"Oh, Mr. Cobb," spoke up Miss Becky Stewart, who sat in the back seat on the girl's side, "Miss Josie helps do it all. She does most of it. Course us girls and boys help, but you just ought to see how she finds dirt after us." Then a lad chimed in, and still another, till Miss "Josie" was overwhelmed with their compliments. It was all nice! Suppose the delighted and loving pupils did speak up without being asked? It was in a good cause, and it was orderly and polite. Then why not? Had not the superintendent come to bring good cheer and encouragement? Was it not good for them all to enter into a little chat about a very big subject? Isn't there too much stiffness about schools in general, and would it not be better if pupils were allowed a chance to learn to be ladies and gentlemen?

"Miss Alger," continued Silas, "I cannot say too much in praise of the general appearance of your schoolgrounds and room. I have never

seen anything quite equaling it in my life, any where. You are instilling into the minds of your pupils some of the most important lessons of life. Such taste and neatness displayed in the decorations of this room are of great importance. This school is to be doubly congratulated; first, in having you as a teacher, and second, in thoroughly appreciating you and following your leadership. Now please tell me how you manage to keep your playgrounds and outbuildings in such a neat condition?"

"If you will permit me, Mr. Cobb, I will call on Captain Jenkins to explain that to you, as he is responsible largely for that work," replied Miss Alger, smiling.

"Certainly, Miss Alger," said Silas, rather surprised, as all eyes were centered on a fourteen-year-old lad in the back seat. Captain Jenkins, almost bursting with pride, yet greatly confused, was urged in an encouraging tone of voice to tell all about it. "Course," he said, "there isn't much to tell about it. Miss Alger appointed me captain because I made the highest average in deportment for the term, and my duty is to direct the work of cleaning the school-grounds and house, and she gave me a plan to give credit marks to my men for doing the work. We plant the trees, flowers and shrubbery during the spring term, and the flowers we take care of much

as we can during the vacation. But when school begins we clear off all the weeds and get everything washed up in good shape during the first week. We have quite a lot of stuff growing in our beds that we have gathered up in our botanical excursions. Then, too, we have gathered all those insects in that case over there. That is not done under me, though. I have charge of the playgrounds at recess. I have several officers under me who help manage things. All boards, ball clubs and other things we may have to play with are always put away on a shelf in the coal-house when the bell rings. Every other afternoon in the spring and fall we wash the floor. There are so many of us it only takes us twenty minutes to do the job after the pupils all get out. Then we wipe with damp cloths all the window sills, desks, and every point where dust accumulates, every day after school closes. That keeps our room fresh and clean and we all feel better. I believe that is all I can think of to tell about."

Over in the third seat from the front on the boys' side, little Willie Sharp now vigorously snapped his finger and held up a reasonably clean hand.

"Well, what is it, Willie?" asked Miss Alger.

"I jist got ten credits to-day noon, teacher, and I'm a lootenant now. Capt'n 'pointed me while you was ringin' the bell." His face was all aglow

with happiness, and it is safe to say that few mortals in mature life ever reach the pinnacle of happiness that little Willie did that moment, when Superintendent Cobb smiled on him, and told him he was a brave boy, and one whom he was sure would never disgrace his position by any misdeeds. And didn't it make little Willie a better boy?

"Captain Jenkins," asked Mr. Cobb, "what do you do when some one of your men won't work, or take any interest in your flowers, shrubs and trees? Do you attempt to make them take part?"

"Oh no, Mr. Cobb. We wouldn't do that, for Miss Alger don't even make us do it. Every boy in school is glad to do it. The better he does his work the more credits he gets, and the boy that didn't work wouldn't have much fun, for this is like being men, and doing things like men do them. Then all the boys want to be captain some day, and the only way to be captain is to win credits in doing good work."

"How about the girls, Miss Alger, do you have a similar organization among them?" asked Silas.

"We used to, Mr. Cobb, but the whole school now works on the same plan together, and the honors are about equally divided between the sexes. I am the high judge to whom all hard questions of law and equity are referred, and one of our rules provides that an officer may be

removed from office for conduct unbecoming a gentleman, or a lady. This rule has a splendid effect on us all in making us control our tempers, and act with reason and justice. To begin with, many were removed from office, and had to begin at the bottom again, but now it has been a year since the last officer was removed for unbecoming conduct. It is a great educator, and we are ever so much better now than we were. In the beginning we often got angry on the playgrounds and quarreled, but nothing but demerit marks came from it, and now we scarcely ever get angry. When we do we keep still. We used to have dirty faces now and then, which also was only good to get us demerited, so we now almost always have clean faces and hands. All the little courtesies due each other are subjects for our careful attention, and it does seem that we have greatly improved. The government of the school is now easy as every pupil here, even the little fellows, are imbued with enthusiasm and ambition to reach a high place in the government."

That afternoon when the work of the classes was finished, Miss Alger tapped her bell, and the pupils laid away their books and slates, etc., in their desks very methodically and without haste. At another tap they turned facing the aisle, and at another they stood, and still another the columns filed through the cloak rooms. As it

was warm weather they had no wraps and it was not necessary for them to pass back to their seats. Instead they filed outside. As Silas glanced over the vacant room, he was pleased to note that there was not a book nor anything used by the pupils visible any where. He had scarcely taken note of all this before his attention was directed to Captain Jenkins, who had marshaled his men outside, and eight of them entered the room again. Each of the first three carried a pail of water. The other five had brooms. There was no noise or hurry, their movements being precise and very business-like. The boys with the water distributed it over the floor, and the five with brooms came after them. In less than ten minutes the water, with two or three more pails added, was all swept out at the door. While the sweepers were at work, four girls, headed by Becky Stewart, followed with damp cloths, and dusted all the desks, table and window sills. The windows were all up, and the warm September wind dried the floor rapidly.

The work was all done, and the children were trooping joyously off home along the hills and creek bottoms within twenty minutes from the time school was dismissed.

Silas and Miss Alger had been witnesses of the work from a side window by the pansy bed. They were still standing there amid the songs of the

crickets and katy-dids, fanned by the delightful autumn breezes, as the last of Captain Jenkins and his men disappeared along the lane bordered with trees of many-colored foliage. The absence of the children seemed to be a signal for all those insects that plaintively sing the death song of summer to begin, and their sad humming noise seemed to drive away thoughts of the present and leave one in a reflective mood. Miss Alger knelt by the pansy bed and plucked a bunch of the largest flowers. While she was engaged at this self-appointed task, Silas noticed her thin hands and plain face, somewhat lined by the passing years. He noticed her thin and small figure as she knelt there by him, and could not help thinking of all the years she had toiled and suffered almost unnoticed, because she was plain and unassuming. He saw that all her youth and beauty had been laid as an offering at the feet of the people, and they had accepted it as a matter of fact, because, forsooth, they paid for it. They did not know nor appreciate that all they got had not been paid for, neither could money buy it. They had not paid her for the heart and life that went from her to those pupils. They had simply paid for her knowledge of the multiplication table and similar qualifications, but the real things of value they knew not of, nor appreciated. The great lessons of love and life she

taught were not laid down in her text-books, but they emanated from a heart that had been nourished at the bosom of Mother Earth, and had grown so strong and natural that it took in the whole world with love and pity—love for its virtues and pity for its frailities.

She arose from her kneeling position with a bunch of pansies which she began to arrange into a bouquet.

"Miss Alger," said Silas feelingly, as he stood watching her, "I want you to know that I appreciate you and your work probably better than any of your legion of acquaintances, and I appreciate it so much that I am sure I shall not find words sufficiently strong to do you justice. You have put your life into your work, and while these people will never be able to half appreciate all you have given them, yet the good you have done these children is a sufficient reward. Your influence will have a decided effect on their future. I know I have much to credit to you myself. I feel better and stronger for having seen your work and been with you this afternoon. I can better help others, now that you have helped me."

Miss Alger stood there full of suppressed emotion as she received the first really intelligent compliment she ever heard on her work from a man able to judge. The lovely pansies in her hands shook in spite of her, and the tears gathered

in her eyes. The man she admired and respected most of all her acquaintances had praised her work. It seemed worth all her years of labor and sacrifice unnoticed, to hear him, of all others, tell her so. Yet she tried to laugh as she said, "You are worthy of these, Mr. Cobb, and I will pin them on your coat as a token of my great respect for you and appreciation of your compliment. I prize it very much—much more than you can imagine. There, now! and I will pin one on myself—decorate myself with flowers, in celebration of the day of my greatest happiness, for you must know, Mr. Cobb, that was the first compliment ever passed on my work by a county superintendent. You can now better appreciate my childish delight, for I have starved for a word—only a word, you know, of assurance that I was doing right—for many a long year. You will pin it?—if you please, sir. How a kind word changes the whole prospect of life—thank you, Mr. Cobb," and her trembling little hand crept into his, where it was sure to find warmth and sympathy.

At that moment there was nothing plain in her face. It was lit up with the light that comes only from a great loving heart that feels a kindly interest in the whole human race, both weak and strong alike.

"You love your work, Miss Alger, for its own

sake. Your heart is wrapped up in your task. That is why you have done it so well. All masterpieces in literature, art or mechanics, have

"You will pin it?—if you please sir."

been produced by men who did it for the pure love of doing it. If one does not like his work, his success will be very mediocre. Time-servers

barely eke out an existence. It is possible to develop a love in our hearts for quality which will leave us happy and bring out all the good that is in us, even though our task be very humble. I once knew a boot-black who gained a reputation as wide as that of the governor of his own State, only in a different line. He did not like shoe-polishing at first, but he did his work fairly well, and one day a jolly, good-hearted traveling man told him he did his work splendidly, and if he would put more heart in it he would find many people who would appreciate it, and go out of their way to get his services. This encouragement awakened a new desire, and new brain cells were built up along that line of thought. In time he got to taking the keenest delight is seeing the shoe take on a glossy surface. His heart began to enter into his work, and as it did a wonderful change for the better took place. In a short time traveling men began to take notice of his work and speak about it. "Where did you get that 'shine'?" some one would ask. "Harvey put that on—the black boy at the Capitol hotel. Isn't it perfect?" So Harvey's reputation spread over the State, and as commercial travelers do not recognize State boundaries, it went beyond, and I heard him spoken of often and made quite a subject of discussion a thousand miles away from his town, all because he put his heart into

his work and did it better than his fellows. Commercial travelers from all other hotels, where there were boot-blacks a plenty (time-servers), would go over to the Capitol hotel to get Harvey to shine their shoes. But I fear I am keeping you rather late, Miss Alger."

"Oh no! you are not, Mr. Cobb. I enjoy your talk ever so much."

Silas untied his horse, and turning to her, laughingly said: "This is Blaze-face, Miss Alger, and I think you will like each other as you grow better acquainted. The rascal seems to have a preference for the ladies and apples, especially apples. But with these mild faults, he is the most sensible animal in this county, so Mr. Boggs says. Come, get your hat, and I will take you to your boarding place, so Blaze-face can show off his good points."

XXXI.

A few weeks after Silas had visited Miss Alger's school he had a caller from that district. Mrs. Willoby had moved into the district the year before, and had entered into the life of the district at once with avidity. She had taught school back in the woods of Indiana and Ohio, and what she didn't know about the business, from her point of view, wouldn't make a primer. She came into Superintendent Cobb's office with an air of importance quite befitting her state of mind, and after a few common-place words of greeting, she set forth the object of her visit:

"Mr. Cobb, I feel it my duty to lay before you the state of affairs in our school. Before I begin, perhaps it will be well for me to explain to you that I am an old teacher, myself. I have taught school in two States, and a dozen different counties, and probably twenty different schools. I have recommendations from seven county superintendents, and my work has been commended by hundreds of patrons. My specially strong point, if I have any one stronger than another, is the proper disciplining along the lines of culture and good manners. My family was of gentle stock, and I suppose I inherit that taste. So you see, Mr. Cobb, I am quite able to see the weak points

in our school, and I feel it my duty to come to you at once, as there is no one else in our district really capable of making a clear statement of the trouble."

Silas had not taken his eyes from her face, and she was yet very favorably impressed with herself when she paused for breath.

"Go on, Mrs. Willoby, and state your trouble," said Silas.

"Well, it is just this," she said. "That Miss Alger has not been conducting her school as she ought to. I told her so last year, and Mr. Littleman told me to tell her, but it did no good whatever. She just smiled and thanked me and went on just as before. I came up here to see the Professor two weeks after we moved into the district and bought our present farm, and I told him then, in very plain language, that I did not send my boy to school to learn to scrub and clean the schoolgrounds. The very idea is revolting to a refined taste, and the Professor said so, too. He said I ought to go right up and have it stopped. I told the director about it, but he as good as insulted me then and there. Said something about it not going to hurt my son to learn to scrub, and I just turned my back on him, and have shown him several times since that it doesn't pay to insult a lady of family. What I want you to do, Mr. Cobb, is to revoke that old maid's certificate,

or have her put out of that school. I just won't have any such low-down proceedings going on there. We own more property and pay more taxes than any one there, and ought to have a say about how our school is to be taught."

"Mrs. Willoby," replied Silas, "I am pained and surprised to hear you speak the way you have. There is not a sweeter nor more noble-minded woman living than Miss Alger. If there ever lived a person with a more practical and intelligent idea of what is proper in a schoolroom than she has, I have never had the pleasure of meeting her. Either you or I are entirely wrong in our estimate of her school work, for I hold the highest opinion of it. She comes the nearest to my ideal teacher of any one I ever knew."

"Did I ever in my life hear the like!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoby, now in a flutter. "I thought from your refined appearance, Mr. Cobb, you would be a man of refined tastes. I am perfectly amazed!"

"My dear Mrs. Willoby," replied Silas, rather seriously, looking her straight in the eyes, "our standards are different, that is all. You ought not to trouble yourself over that. Your ideals are not like mine, so, of course, we cannot appreciate the same things. I do not feel amazed by your insinuation that I am coarse in my tastes, because I see you honestly believe that. We must learn to be patient with one another. You

have not understood Miss Alger at all. Her high ideals and motives are easily discovered if you look for them. I fear, Mrs. Willoby, you have only seen what seem to be faults, and have made them so large that you cannot see her virtues. Now, to take up the criticism you offer, let us consider the aim of education. You mentioned one of the cardinal points yourself, one in which you say you have attained proficiency. No one can attach too much importance to the culture of the mind, as to matters of social relations among men. But that is not the only important feature. The child should be taught to do well everything he does, or will have to do in after life. Miss Alger not only teaches the matter pertaining to text books, but she teaches neatness and accuracy in every act of the pupil. He is taught cleanliness, both in person and surroundings. This you seem to object to. Your school board does not pay for a janitor. Miss Alger is perfectly willing to do the janitor's work, but she has adopted a method of having her pupils assist her, and even this she works into a valuable lesson, and makes it seem like play to the children. She is so careful in keeping the schoolroom neat and clean that the pupils acquire, after a few years, such tastes along those lines that the effect can be noticed at home by the general appearance of the premises. I have particularly noticed this in No. 6. Miss

Alger has taught that school nearly four years, and I assure you I can tell when driving through that neighborhood just where the boundaries of No. 6 begin and end by the neatly kept farmyards and houses. Miss Alger not only keeps her own premises looking well, but she inspires the children to see that things are kept nice at home. Now you will pardon me, I am sure, Mrs. Willoby, for making a personal application in this case. I do it with the kindliest intent, for I want to bring you and Miss Alger together. Such talented women as you are ought to work together. Now, to go on. You have not lived in No. 6 yet one year, and four months of that was during vacation time. I passed through the neighborhood a few weeks ago, and I was particularly attracted by the neat appearance of the barn-yards and the grassy lawns around the houses. All of it could be traced to the efforts of Miss Alger's pupils. They come home from school and see to it themselves that rubbish and pieces of board are gathered up and burned, or put out of sight. They mend broken fences and walks, and keep down the weeds. This the pupils do as a matter of pride. It is a little bit of disgrace for a pupil to live with such signs of carelessness around him. As I drove on I saw quite a number of homes almost perfectly kept, considering the opportunity, but at last I came to one that showed signs of

much neglect. I said to myself, 'This must be in No. 5.' It did not look like a home where an Alger boy or girl lived. The barn-yard was lit-

"I came to one that showed signs of much neglect."

tered up with sticks, pieces of boards, an old broken hay-rake, a broken plow, and various other rubbish common to most barn-yards outside of No. 6. The lawn around the house had patches of weeds in it, and a broken slat or two could be

seen in the fence. The walk was also broken and out of repair. In short, no Alger boy lived there, I thought. But to my surprise, Mrs. Willoby, and I hope you will pardon my seeming rudeness in mentioning it, this place, as you no doubt have recognized, was your own, and your boy, whom you think above learning to scrub and clean up his own litter at school, lives daily in these surroundings unconscious of them, because, in my opinion, you have over-shadowed Miss Alger's influence over him. Now what I hope is that you will go yourself, and look at Miss Alger's school. Just stay a day and watch them work heart and soul at whatever they are set to do. You cannot help seeing the far-reaching influence of her methods. I have seen them everywhere. You have lost their effect because you have misunderstood Miss Alger, and I hope you will see for yourself that these things I tell you are true."

By this time Mrs. Willoby was left stranded in a perfect calm. What could she say, and how could she answer him? She knew her place was just as he described it, and she remembered having asked her husband one day, as they drove to Cowville, why other people had such pretty places who didn't have half the wealth they had. But she had never dreamed that all this was due to Miss Alger's school. She could not feel hurt toward Mr. Cobb, because he was so kind and considerate

and honest; yet it all hurt her pride. She wanted him to think her gentle and well-bred. She had told him she was. She must live up to it, so she said: "Mr. Cobb, I am very glad to have had you talk this way to me. It has hurt me a little—my pride, I suppose, but I am going to visit the school and see for myself, as you suggested. If you are not mistaken, I have surely misjudged the effect of her methods."

That ended the matter. The next time Silas heard from No. 6, Mrs. Willoby and Miss Alger were friends, and Willoby's back-yard, as well as front, had been cleaned, and the last eyesore of No. 6 had been removed.

XXXII.

Conditions change so rapidly in this country that a man of middle age often finds himself marveling at the great stride of progress made since he was a boy. Even Brush county, Illinois, cannot now boast of a school like the one Andy Weaver taught down on Brush Creek, back in the "eighties." It was one of the old-fashioned, rough-and-ready schools that delighted in locking out the teacher and keeping him out until the demand for a treat of some kind was granted. It took more muscle than brains to teach such a school, and the contest was never a one-sided affair.

The combats often ended in the teacher being thrown out and given a good pounding by the big boys of the school. During the winter that Andy Weaver took the school in hand, some of these rough lads had indulged this taste to extremes, and had thrown out two teachers in as many months, which was sufficient to arouse the school board to action. They seemed not to bother themselves about one teacher's being thrown out, but when two of their selection had been ruthlessly turned out into the cold world, the board sent for Andy Weaver with an honest intention of checking the disturbances. Yet, it is a fact,

the whole neighborhood, with a few exceptions, took some pride in the strength and prowess of these rough lads. The school board employed teachers on a principle foreign to the true theory of what a teacher ought to be. They asked no questions about his qualifications intellectually, but they examined him critically on his physical strength and courage. No woman had ever been employed so far as any one knew. What could a woman do with such a school? They must have a man, and a big one at that, or they would have no school.

The last two teachers had given up the work after a month's trial each, and finally the board employed Andy Weaver to begin where the last teacher left off. He came to them highly recommended for courage and strength, though he was not a large man by any means.

The first day started off very nicely, and Andy began to feel that the school was not so bad after all. At noon he had a very nice chat with Bill Green, the leader, and three or four of his associates, the boys all as large as Mr. Weaver, and from seventeen to twenty years old.

The afternoon recess came on before any inkling of trouble showed itself. The smaller children naturally looked on Bill Green as a hero, because he had thrown out two former teachers, so they began to wonder if Bill wasn't afraid of the new

one. The truth was he had rather taken a liking to Mr. Weaver, who had come up to him at recess and slapped him on the back, saying, "Well, William, how are you, any way, and what are you going to do next summer?" This was a good start. He liked Weaver for that rough, hearty slap. He seemed like a good fellow, and not like the two girl-boys he had thrown out of the house.

But the little "brats," as Bill called the children, spoiled it all. One little fellow, nicknamed "Dirty-face," came up with the taunt, "Yer afeard of the new teacher, ain't ye, Bill?" Then to avoid a cuff that was sure to follow, he dodged around a group of girls and got away, but yelled back over their heads, "Bill's afeard! Bill's afeard! Looky! Bill's afeard!" The girls joined the boys in their teasing and loud laughter at Bill's expense.

'Manda Brown said, "I jist hope Bill will git a good poundin', and teacher kin do it, too. Bill knows it. That's why he keeps so still."

"Bill don't know it, nuther," retorted that young man. "I kin jist tell ye now that no sich little thing as that teacher is kin lick me."

"Lis'n at 'im talk," yelled little "Dirty-face" from a safe distance. "Ain't he brave? Ain't he a buster? Teacher 'll take him across his lap and spank Billy shore for that big talk. He'll—" but he had to dodge around the corner of the

house to escape a board Bill had hurled at him, so the sentence was unfinished.

Bill's chums joined in the wrangle, and declared that the teacher would have his hands full to lick all four of them.

These four large boys bullied the remainder of the pupils so much that they had alienated their sympathy.

Mr. Weaver had overheard all this talk and was growing uneasy, and concluded he had better change the conversation, so he put on his hat and went out. As he did so he called to the boys that were lined up against the schoolhouse, and said, "Can't we have a good run, boys, before I call school? What's the matter with a game of 'pull-away?' William, let you and me stand the whole school; what do you say?" Everybody was delighted and gathered around the teacher talking, laughing and jostling each other. Bill came up last, rather reluctantly, and said "Guess we kin stan' 'em all right."

Then they took their places on the base and the whole school took the other base. The rush began, and Bill tore down through the crowd like a hurricane, catching some half dozen medium-sized boys and girls, but missing the big boys, his chums. The next rush cleaned out all the little fellows, then began a race for the ring-leaders. They could run, and while Bill was a

master in the wrestle or combats with the fist, he was not a match for some of the boys in a race. He could knock down more of the little fellows in a rush when the crowd was thick, but he was too awkard to head off the lithe fellows. So it took four rushes to catch the four big boys, and Mr. Weaver caught them all. Bill fell down twice in dodging after Henry Sweet, and caught nothing but a handful of sod where he measured his length on the ground. Weaver thought this object lesson of his prowess on the playground would have a good effect, and it did on the three chums of Bill. Each felt his wiry grip when he caught them, especially Henry Sweet, who tried to break away. The teacher pinned him so tightly in his arms he could scarcely breathe. This awed him, for he saw he had met his master. But Bill was sore at heart. He had not forgotten the taunts of "Dirty-face," and now to set an example before the school of letting the teacher catch all the big boys didn't help matters any. He felt mean an ugly; yet as they went into the house Mr. Weaver took hold of Bill's arm as they walked, and laughing, said: "Bill, we are too much for them, aren't we? But I never could have caught armsful of those little fellows like you did. I declare, I believe you caught six in those big arms of yours at one time. My! but you have a muscle there, Bill," and as he said it

he felt of his muscle, and closed down on it with such force that Bill came near screaming out with pain. "Say, but I wish I had an arm like that."

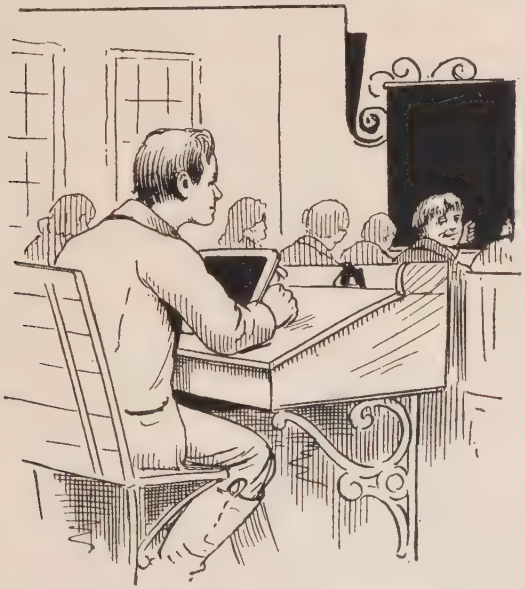
This little incident did two things to Bill. The first was to make him feel better and think the teacher a pretty good fellow, and the other was the sore feeling about that muscle which made him respect the teacher's grip.

So he took his seat—the back one, which he always took by force each winter when he started to school—feeling better and happier. He took out his slate and began to "cipher," and after a few minutes' work he happened to look up and saw "Dirty-face" looking back at him, grinning like a little devil, which he really was, and heard him whisper, "Yer afeard, Bill, ain't ye? I'd hate t' be a coward."

Bill wanted to kill him then and there, and the only way he could satisfy his anger was to hurl a spelling book, which hit "Dirty-face" squarely in the back of the head and flew off on the floor.

Mr. Weaver saw the whole performance out of the corner of his eye, and heard "Dirty-face" taunt him, but he hoped to pass the day without a fight. If he could have a few days he felt he would be able to handle the boys without the rod. But this was not destined to come to pass. The entire school knew Bill had thrown the book, and

as the teacher had said nothing about it, their confidence in him rather weakened, and they began to feel a little pride in Bill, and envy him his



"Yer afeard, Bill, ain't ye? I'd hate to be a coward."

ability to do as he pleased. Even "Dirty-face" began to feel he wasn't a coward, and his respect for him grew. Bill felt that he had made a reputation for himself, and began to feel the change that was creeping over the school. 'Manda Brown smiled at him, and Henry Sweet looked

around with pride. Even "Dirty-face" changed front and began to glory in Bill's courage to do a thing like that in "school-time." Things were going from bad to worse. Insubordination was creeping out all over the school. Things too small to be noticed at first, grew and kept growing until the climax was reached when the teacher called the first spelling class. "Dirty-face" was a member of this class, but he sat insolently in his seat, and when he was asked by the teacher why he didn't come to the class, he replied, "Not goin' t' spell t'-night."

"Oh, yes you are, Edward (alias "Dirty-face"). Come on now and take your place. We want to have a good class to-day, and I fear it would not be complete without you. Come along now, quickly," said the teacher.

"Said I'se not goin' t' spell t'-night. So there, now!" replied "Dirty-face."

"I hope you won't make me come after you, Edward?"

"Ye kin come ef ye want t'. Nobody's holdin' ye back I guess."

Mr. Weaver got up and walked back to Edward's seat and took hold of his arm to take him out, but Edward commenced to fight and scratch like a cat. In the midst of the scuffle the teacher got him out of his seat, and as he glanced up he saw Bill get out of his seat, and heard him

call out, "Let him alone. Ye needn't think ye can run this here school. Ye can't do it." He came forward in anger, with up-lifted hand. As Bill came on two other big boys joined him. Andy stooped down and picked up a small round stick of wood that lay by the stove, and very quietly said: "You boys sit down, at once," and as he talked he held "Dirty-face" by the collar with his left hand, and was ready to meet the boys with the stick of stove wood in his right. But Bill was no coward, either, and had had experience in throwing out teachers larger, or as large as Andy Weaver was, so he came on, and struck out viciously at Andy's head. His blow was parried, and the next instant that stick of wood came down across Bill's temple, and he went down in a heap on the floor, but he had scarcely been struck when the other two boys were raining blows onto the teacher. The children were screaming with fright, and standing in their seats. It took just about three or four seconds for Andy to pound the other boys into submission and into their seats. Both of them had blackened eyes and mashed noses, and blood was flowing freely. It was indeed a "rough house." Bill had not yet revived when Andy had both the boys back in their seats begging for mercy. He ordered the children to get down into their seats and stop screaming. Then he looked at Bill, who had now raised on his elbow.

He took him by the arm and said kindly, "Come, Will, old fellow, and let me help you up. Are you hurt much?" Bill made no reply. He helped him up and onto a seat. The blood was running in a stream from a deep cut across the side of his head. Andy took the basin and filled it with cold water and began bathing the wound with his pocket handkerchief. His hands were tender and his voice soothing as he worked and talked to Bill. "It's not bad, Will, only a cut. The skin is cut clean, which accounts for so much blood. You will be all right in a day or so, and then we will get along in good shape." Bill was pale and did not feel like talking, but he started to say something, when some one rapped at the door, and the last visitor on earth whom Andy wanted to come at such a moment stood on the threshold. It was Silas Cobb.

Andy stood with a basin of water in one hand and his handkerchief in the other. The use he was making of these articles Silas was not slow in discerning. One boy sat pale and weak, with a cut across his temple, the blood wiped off. The other two boys had blood all over their faces and hands, which Silas reasoned Andy had not yet got around to.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Weaver. I am glad to see you." He seemed not in the least surprised, which rather surprised Andy.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Cobb. I am sorry you catch me engaged in an occupation I am not exactly used to, but it can't be helped. Please

"Andy stood with a basin of water in one hand and his handkerchief in the other."

take my chair, and excuse me a few moments."

"Oh, just go right on, Mr. Weaver, with your work. Don't mind me. I am a visitor, and like

to see things just as they are. I will amuse myself with these girls over here. How do you do, girls," and at this Andy turned and said, "Pupils, this is Superintendent Cobb, whom we are glad to welcome to our school." [The sign "God Bless Our School," was nailed to the wall over the teacher's desk.] The pupils had half suspected who it was, and his presence relieved the intense excitement, for he at once set about to distract their attention. He had heard about the trouble the school had been making, so he had come out on purpose to examine into it right at the beginning of Mr. Weaver's term. He walked down the aisle, talking to the pupils in a light vein, just as if he had always been there, and when he got to the front at the teacher's desk, he turned around and told them a pretty story that was full of fun, and in a little while the whole school, except the belligerents, were laughing heartily. In the meantime, Andy was bathing bruised heads. When his task was done he came forward and, as it was 4 o'clock, he dismissed the school, after Superintendent Cobb had finished his remarks. Nothing, however, was said about the fight.

After the pupils were gone, Andy told Silas all the details, and assured him if he had had another day or so he thought he might have won, but Edward (Dirty-face) had brought the matter to a

focus at once, and he had won a victory with a stick of wood, which he hoped would bring about a long reign of peace.

"Well," said Silas, "I hope it will. If the parents do their duty now, we won't have any more trouble. But if they take the matter up and begin war on you, nothing has been gained. Of course it is very bad, and grates on one's feelings to have scenes like these enacted in a schoolroom, but I declare, Mr. Weaver, though I deplore it, I don't know how you could have done differently. This district has had no school to speak of for years. This boy, Green, is a bully and the people have helped to make him so. Some one might have handled them, but this is not proven. At any rate, I am sure I would have had to use your method. But I know of a girl, Andy, who I think would manage them without the rod. She is the greatest character I ever saw in a schoolroom. You know her, Josephine Alger, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I know Miss Alger well. She *is splendid.*"

"I feel it so strongly, Andy, that if there were enough like her to fill all the schools, you and I would do well for our country by turning our attention to something else. Yet you and I need not be discouraged. We are not the worst by any means. I only know of one Miss Alger, so you

see I still have a high opinion of ourselves," he finished, laughing.

Andy reverted to the Greens. That name had vast possibilities in it. Old Bill Green was a terror. Everybody said young Bill was a chip from the old block. So Andy asked: "Won't old Mr. Green come down to-morrow and attempt to do what his son failed to do to-day?"

"I think he will," replied Silas seriously. "It is just like him to do that very thing. He is very proud of the family record as fighters."

"Well, then, I am done for if he does," answered Andy, dejectedly.

"I think, Andy, you had better get in the buggy with me now, and I will take you up to old Mr. Green's place, and save him a trip down here. If you must be thrashed," he said with a laugh, "I will referee the fight, or act as your second." Andy laughed weakly, and put on his overcoat and hat. They set out for Green's place and when they got there the old man was feeding the sheep in a little pasture near the barn. Young Bill had been home over an hour, but was not able to do his chores, and his father had to take his place. When he saw the buggy at the barn gate he came out, and as he drew near he saw who it was.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mister Cobb, and Mister Weaver, too? Howdy do, gentlemen! Won't

ye drive in a while? Supper's 'bout ready."

"No, Mr. Green, we can't stop but a few minutes. I thought you would enjoy a good, hearty laugh with me over the little episode that happened down at the schoolhouse this afternoon, so I couldn't resist driving by and seeing you. Did Bill tell you about what a trouncing he got to-day, he and two or three other boys?"

"You bet he did, that is, the gal told it. Bill ain't said much 'bout it. He's badly cut up, I kin tell ye. How did ye do that any how, Mister Weaver, when ye're so little? I fully 'spected the boys 'ud throw ye out and told that school board so, but ye've shorely spiled Bill fer doin' chores fer a week, which is the only thing I kere fer. Don't think I ever saw Bill 'pear so weak as he does to-night. He's feelin' bad, I guess."

"Well, I am very sorry about it, Mr. Green, and if I could have avoided it I would. But there was no hope for it when they pitched on to me. I had to fight hard or go under, and I felt your school would be ruined unless I mastered those boys at once. I have the boys all right now, and if the parents will keep hands off I can promise you a good school."

"Ye can bet yer life the parents 'ill keep hands off. Let any of 'em try puttin' hands on ye, and I'll show 'em how it's done. Ye've done right. Ye saved me havin' to lick Bill

myself. He is so stuck-up since he throwed out them other two teachers, he thinks he can handle me. Glad ye licked him, Mr. Weaver. Lick him often and ye'll have my blessin's."

This point of view was a great surprise to both Silas and Andy, and as they drove away they decided the war was in fact over. The others would take the cue from old Bill Green and no more trouble need be looked for.

If Silas Cobb had not referred to the matter as a huge joke in old man Green's presence, there is not the least doubt of his joining hands with Bill to make war on the teacher. The fact that Superintendent Cobb and Weaver took him into the joke, made him a fast friend and supporter of the school.

Bill did not come to school again for a week, and he came then only after Andy had called three times to visit him. On these visits the teacher made a special point of giving the boy new light on the subject of how to meet "Dirty-face's" taunts. He was brought to see the teacher's side of the subject and to see how foolish it was to let a little boy lead him on to doing wrong. It was a weakness and not a strength. A young man with his great physical strength and courage should not be afraid of being called a coward. He should fear that as

little as he did a physical combat if he would be a good all-around strong man.

The result of this argument brought Bill to school one morning. He and the teacher walked along together, and often during the term Bill would walk a half mile out of his way in order to have the pleasure of Andy's company. While he was a thick-headed boy, speaking from a mental point, yet the influence of those walks and talks kindled the smallest spark of ambition in him. One thing that especially appealed to him was Andy's wonderful stories of the great West, where young men became prominent and rich, if they only used their talents in the right direction. He must first learn to control himself, and get an education, then he would have a show of winning a place.

The boys of that school grew up and most of them are now men with families, and while Bill never would nor could be a brilliant man, yet he did learn a great deal from Andy Weaver that winter, and the spark that was struck in his sluggish mind grew in brightness, and it led him out of Brush creek one fine day, and far away to the West to test Andy's stories. And it came to pass that he was chosen deputy sheriff and later sheriff of a frontier county in Colorado. He is a fair sheriff, too, and fills the office creditably. His position is not of much importance in the

eye of the average man, but to Bill it is a mighty altitude of greatness. He writes back to his parents on Brush creek many wonderful stories of his operations in the West, and old Bill Green spends his odd moments relating and embellishing the principal events to his neighbors. He is now a hero and worshipped as such by all the Creek boys who went to school with him.

It is only fair to Mr. Weaver to say that Bill gives him due credit for having opened his eyes to the advantages of "edication." He says any boy can do what he has done if he will take Andy Weaver's advice and "behave hisself." But after all his weakness, he is a great improvement on his immediate ancestry; all of which shows that effort is not wasted, though it be spent on such as Bill Green.

XXXIII.

One day late in October, Silas got an invitation from Professor Flick, of Terre Haute, to attend a banquet to be given there on the following Saturday night in honor of a visiting educator from some distant State. He accepted the invitation and when he stepped off the train at Terre Haute, Professor Flick was there to meet him and took him to his rooms in a large, rambling brick house, set back from the street among many old trees. After spending a very pleasant hour chatting over current topics of interest, they came down to a general discussion of the Normal school, of whose faculty Mr. Flick was a member.

"By the way, Mr. Cobb, I have just gotten a very bright young lady a place to "wait tables" here in our dining-room to help her along in her work. She was such an aristocratic looking lady that I was amazed when she inquired if I knew where she could get such a place, for she said she couldn't remain the whole year unless she could do something like that to help pay expenses."

Just then a little bell was rung summoning them to supper. They went down stairs and entered a large dining-room, nicely furnished. None of the other boarders had yet arrived, so

Silas and Mr. Flick had the entire room to themselves. They were interested in a discussion of some kind and did not notice the young lady who came in to take their supper order until she was standing at Mr. Flick's elbow. Silas did not glance up, but as soon as she spoke, he pushed back his chair and rose to his feet, facing the young lady who now looked around rather surprised at his movement. It was Julia Howe. She stood looking at him in perfect astonishment, and the Professor now became interested as a spectator. Without a particle of surprise showing in his face, Silas held out his hand to her.

"Why, how do you do, Miss Howe? I am delighted to see you," and his face didn't give him the lie either. She was so surprised she could scarcely control herself to speak, so in order to relieve her embarrassment and the Professor's surprise, he turned to him and said, "This is one of my Brush county teachers, Mr. Flick, and a friend of mine from childhood. I am very glad to know you two are acquainted. This is the young lady you have been telling me about, then?"

"Yes. Well, isn't this interesting now?" replied the Professor.

"I surely must say it is," spoke up Julia, now somewhat recovered, and she held out both her hands to Silas as of old, but this time in a sincere manner. "I am so glad to see you Mr.

Cobb. It seems like home to see your face here, and I am so homesick it does me good to see some one from there."

"Had I known you were here, Julia, I would have called on your mother and brought you news of her and your brothers. But I think they are well, and I am glad to note that you are apparently well and happy also."

Just here some students came in and the conversation necessarily ceased. Miss Howe brought in their suppers and then waited on the others, and Silas forgot his and ate it mechanically, as he reflected on what he had discovered. Now and then he watched her movement with a tray of dishes. Saw her delicate hands tremble as she set the side dishes around the plates. Saw the flush of excitement on her cheeks, and watched the sparkle of her eyes. He noticed the pleasure the boarders felt in having her near them, and his own pleasure in seeing her come and go in her white dress and lace-bordered apron. He forgot Professor Flick, and was only called back to his duty to his friend by the Professor's question in regard to Miss Howe's past. Silas briefly told him she was a very estimable young lady of his county whom he had advised to go to school and better fit herself for teaching. That was the substance of what he told. He did not say he was surprised to find her in Terre Haute, and doubly

so, to find her working in a dining-room to help pay her way through school.

On leaving the dining-room he spoke to Julia, aside, and asked her if she would be at liberty to see him the following afternoon (Sunday).

"Why, of course I will, Silas, and I shall be so glad, too, for you are the first person I have seen since I left home that I knew, and I am so homesick. Do come early for the time will be too short. Oh, I have it, can't—excuse me if I am wrong—can't you go to church with me in the forenoon, also, or are you engaged, and am I asking too much of you?"

"Not a bit of it, Julia," he said. "I am delighted to accept, and thank you for your kindness in asking me," and he turned to the Professor and added, "you will give me over to this young lady, won't you, Professor? I know you can't resist her demands, now, can you?"

The Professor's face showed very clearly he couldn't resist anything she might ask him for, and he said so promptly.

The next morning Silas and Julia walked down the avenue of trees, and in and out of the sunshine and shadow, on their way to church. It was a mild, still day and the church bells were ringing when they started. As they strolled along chatting, Julia told him in confidence, just as if he were an old friend or a

brother, that she had something to show him and talk about, but she didn't want to begin then. There was not time and she wanted him alone, away from the crowds of people, so they could talk unmolested. But the odd moments of their walk to and from church were filled with her account of the experiences she had met with since she arrived in Terre Haute. Often in the midst of her narrative she would look up into his face to see how he was receiving the story—to see if he was approving of her actions. She finished telling him of the battle she had with her pride when it came to working her way through school, and added just as they got to the church steps: "I never could have mastered it, Silas, were it not that when in greatest doubt I always saw your eyes on me, and the shame of it would leave me at once."

They entered the church and were ushered into a high-backed pew, where they were alone for a few moments. As they sat down the great organ pealed forth its soft melody, and Silas leaned over and quietly pressed the hand next to him and whispered, "You did nobly, Julia; God bless you." She sank back in her seat with a sigh of satisfaction, and gave Silas a grateful look and a slight hand-pressure in answer to his endorsement of her action.

"Could it be possible," she thought as she

gazed out over that vast audience and heard the peals of the organ, "that I could ever be happier?" She was doing something now with her heart in it. It was entering into every act. She had ceased to be a sham, and all that life of sordidness was put back in the past. The man who had helped her to do it sat by her side. He had just said she had done nobly. His voice still rang in her ears; the pressure on her hand and his honest face before her—all of it was perfectly delightful, and her heart beat on furiously as though it were clamoring to be heard. Then gradually the soft music began to quiet her heart's beating, and as she grew quiet peace came to her soul and new strength came into her life.

That day the preacher said in his sermon that man did not live in the highest sense until he had mastered his own passions. The peace that comes to those who have crushed pride, anger, hatred, and the thousands of vices that beset us, is too vast and far-reaching to be comprehended by those who have lost the fight. The man who has reached that point has traveled a road beset with danger, and it has taught him to love and pity the weak. Why should he feel bitter toward the man who spitefully uses him? He knows all the grief and trouble that accumulates with the years on his shoulders. Is that not enough in itself to crush him? He looks down from his place of peace,

and pities with all his soul those who are afflicted with hideous things, that grow on their hearts and make their lives one long, stormy struggle. The end comes as last and their souls leap forth, freed from the earthly elements, dwarfed and incomplete.

"Crush out all these things in your hearts, and live so that you can face all the trials of life with a smile, and when death comes, die as you have lived. Your freed spirit will surely be a brave and noble one, fit company for the best."

As Julia sat listening to this sermon, it seemed to her that it was a dedication of her soul to higher aims.

As they left the church Julia turned to Silas and said: "Six months ago I would not have understood that sermon, Silas, but to-day it seemed to tell me all I have learned of late by experience, and it did me so much good to hear it brought out so beautifully. I can just vaguely understand what a grand thing it must be to have a soul so great and good that it could encompass the whole world, and look in love and pity upon the petty strifes and passions of mankind. I say I can just vaguely comprehend it now, and it gives me great hope and courage. But after all, it is you, Silas, to whom I owe it all. You first taught me the way, and your silent sympathy I have felt all the time I have been here. Your

example of good temperament and usefulness has always been before me as a guide."

"It is very kind of you, Julia, to credit me with so much, but I fear in your great appreciation of your success you have over-estimated my help. But I am glad you think so anyway. It encourages me to know you feel that way. I was once in doubt whether I had acted exactly right by you."

That afternoon they strolled down to the private park attached to the grounds of the property where Julia lived, and took a seat under a maple tree. The autumn leaves were scattered over the ground, making a carpet of many colors. Everything had been bitten by an early frost, and while the day was pleasant, yet there was that crispness in the air that suggests the dying year. The leaves had all fallen from the gooseberry bushes and the flowerbeds were covered with dead stalks of the last summer's beauties. The dying year, the eddying leaves in the corner of the grounds near the grape arbor, together with the Sabbath stillness made it a day more fit for those whose veins are not filled with the hot blood of youth. Yet it was a very good day for the mood in which Silas and Julia found themselves.

While they sat on the bench in silence for a few moments, Julia was taking from some

secluded place about her person a letter which she announced was the question at issue.

"This letter, Silas, has made me very happy.

"The autumn leaves were scattered over the ground, making a carpet of many colors."

Not for what it has offered me, for I am not going to use it, but because it has renewed my faith in people in general. But I must let you read it first. I have no one to consult about it

who can advise me intelligently, save you."

Silas took the letter and as he glanced over it, his face lit up with pleasure and apparent recognition. Julia looked at him with much interest. The letter was written in a cramped, irregular hand on "Bank of Cowville" stationery. The following is a verbatim copy of what he read:

Cowville, Oct. 22, 188—.

Tu Mis Julie Howe,

Terry Hut, Indiany.

Dear Mis—I skercely kno how to begin this letter as writen aint my line and reconizen that this is a partickler subject I will jest say that my meanin is good and hopen you will understan me.

I hev not knowed ye very long but I hev lately found that I hev dun ye a great injestice. When I furst seed ye I thot ye had no hart but I seen lately how wrong I was to think so and I beg you to scuse me. I'm an ole man now an I aint never mounted to much not havin any edication and I aint never looked out any to help any body as I ot to seein that I hev more money than I kin use. So I jest sed to myself theres a young lady who has gone away from hum strugglin fur an edication with probably little money and heres me with more'n I can ever use if I live a hundred years. I'll jest send the gal a little bit as a crismus gif an ef she wont axcept it so she will take it as a loan an pay it back when she kin spare it well.

Ef ye will tek this money I send ye I will be feelin thet I hev dun somethin to mak up fur my

indifrence fur all these years to helpen my bruthers on the way.

I will jest sign myself yer

OLE FREND.

P. S.—I am not given yer my name thus preventin yer returnen the money. I'm hopen that ye will tek it frum an ole man an woman who luves ye like a chile of ther own ef they had eny which they haint ceptin a young man they hev sorter adopted and he's a doin well God bless him."

When Silas read the last lines a new feeling of love came into his heart for the dear old man who had penned those lines, illiterate though they were. He had known from the first glance that it was old Henry Boggs who wrote it, but the last lines referring to him opened a new chamber in his heart.

"Isn't he a grand old man, Silas? Who is he? Do you know? I am so anxious to see him. Do I know him?"

Silas smiled at her eagerness, and said: "I must say, Julia, that I am not without grave suspicion against a certain old friend of mine, yet I am not mentioning any names. But seriously, Julia, this letter has greatly affected me. It is his wish that you keep this money, and it would hurt him very much if you wouldn't do it, so I will tell you who wrote this letter if you promise to let him help you. You can pay him back when you get to teaching."

"I will do as you say, Silas; now who is it? Tell me quickly."

"Old Henry Boggs," said Silas.

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes I do. I am sure of his writing and language."

"Why, I scarcely know him, Silas."

"True, but he knows you. He met you in my office. Then I have told him about you—how I was afraid I had been too hard on you, and he thought I had, too, when I told him how you had changed. He even asked me one day if I wouldn't try to see you for him and get you to let him loan you some money to help you through school. I told him it was too delicate a matter for me to broach, yet I was going to try when I saw you. Just notice, Julia, how he says he has never had a chance to help any one. Why, I know personally of scores of things he has done to help his friends and neighbors, that this seems little along side of them. Julia, he's the most lovable, kindest-hearted man in the world."

"Oh, I know it," replied Julia, with a slight huskiness in her voice. "If he were here now I should surely throw my arms around his neck and kiss him."

Silas glanced down at her serious countenance, smiling at this impulsive out-break, and said: "He would die from delight if you did, Julia, and

I could hardly blame him for it. It would be worth it."

"Shame on you, Silas, to joke me on such a serious matter. I do feel awfully good toward him. When I think of all the people who have said mean things about me, justly, I suppose, and contrast it with his blind faith in me, and his desire to make me happier, I just can't keep from —from—crying," and cry she did.

Silas sat gazing up through the bare apple trees near by feeling rather badly about the matter, thinking his jesting had been sadly out of place.

"I am sorry I said that Julia, but it wasn't for lack of appreciation for the seriousness of the subject."

"Oh, that's all right, Silas, I didn't mind your joke—I—I—rather liked it, but I was so happy over this letter, and your visit, and everything. It seems the world is all good now, and a pleasant place in which to live."

"We measure the world, Julia, with what is in our hearts. When a heart is good the world is good to it; when a heart is bad the world seems bad to it."

The eddying wind swept a shower of leaves over them and sent a shiver down their backs, calling their attention to the chilly atmosphere. "Let us go in, Silas, I fear we will catch our death of cold out here."

XXXIV.

A few days after this incident, Sam Street drove up to old Mr. Boggs' place on his way home from Cowville to leave Mr. Boggs' mail. It was a neighborhood custom that whoever went to town would bring out the mail for the neighbors along the road home.

"Hi there, Henry! here's your mail. Git out uv the house an' git some fresh air."

In answer to this call Mr. Boggs appeared on the porch, excitedly looking over his spectacles and holding in one hand the *Cowville Times* which he had been reading.

"Oh, blame me! ef it ain't Sam Street bellerin' at the gate. I thought my ole bull had bruk through the fence. Howd'y, Sam; how air ye t'-day? Can't ye come in? Git out an' hitch."

"No, hain't got time, Henry; jest brought out yer mail fer ye. Thought maybe ye wouldn't go t' town this week. How air ye feelin' t'-day?"

"Fair t' middlin', thank ye, Sam. I'm jest readin' what Smith's got t' say 'bout the comin' 'lection. I see he thinks the guvnor ain't goin' t' pull through with the rest uv the Republican ticket, an' we may have a chance t' git in our man. What did ye hear 'bout it in town, Sam?"

"Nothin' perticlar. Them fellers air not solid

among themselves. Do ye know, Henry, Muddy Crick township's 'bout the only town in the county that stands fer somethin' every year that can be counted on. Here we vote the ticket an' there's no doubt 'bout it. Cowville ain't certain what it'll do one year with t'other. Chances air, now that we have a chance t' 'lect our guvnor, them town fellers will git t' fightin' among theirselves fer some little office, an' defeat the ticket in this county."

"Did ye see Si Cobb, Sam, an' did he have anything perticlar t' say 'bout it?"

"Yes, Si told me 'bout what I'm tellin' you. He said some uv them town fellers would actually vote fer the Republican guvnor ef they'd git a Republican vote in exchange fer sheriff or some other durn little office. It's a durn shame, Henry, that me an' you should live t' see the day when Democrats git onery 'nough t' trade principles fer office."

"Consarned whelps! Sam, we jest ort t' go in there t'gether an' learn them fellers some decency. Blame me, ef we orten t' eat 'em raw! I sometimes think the country's goin' t' rack an' ruin. Jest t' think men have souls so small they kin trade 'em fer votes every year, an' still keep the miserly things."

"They'd laugh at us, Henry, ef we 'tempted t' give them any pinters. They call me an' you ole

hayseeds that don't know much 'bout up-to-date politics. No, we wouldn't have no influence with them fellers, I'm 'fraid, onless we jest jine hands an' tell what we'll do t' enforce it when they want our votes—we mought kill 'em with Muddy Crick, but we'd have t' bolt, Henry, an' it'd feel funny fer me an' you t' bolt a democratic ticket."

"I kin jest tell ye it would, Sam. It'd come nigh killin' me. Yet I tell ye one thing, ef them town fellers think they kin trade a democratic candidate fer guvnor fer a town councilman an' not git punished fer it, they don't know ole Henry Boggs. Sufferin' Moses! T' think I would ever have t' do it; but I would, I would jest jine hands with ye Sam, an' we'd tell the voters in this township 'bout how they trade our guvnor an' we can defeat their county nominations."

"That's just what Silas Cobb told me. He asked me t' talk it over with you, an' ef me an' you agreed t' back him up, he would read the law t' them fellers. He said the candidate fer guvnor, Mr. Thompson, had heard 'bout the plot there among the leaders uv the party, whereby he wus t' be traded by a few sore-headed fellers who got defeated in the State convention, an' the party machinery turned against him. That sort uv a deal would lose him the county ef it ain't stopped."

"Ye kin bet yer life we'll back him up a plenty.

I'll jest go right t' town t'-morrow myself, an' Sam, ye'd better go too, an' we'll go an' see Si 'bout it."

"All right, Henry, I'll come by in my buggy an' we kin go in t'gether."

"Good 'nough, Sam, my horses is so big we'd not git there quick 'nough with them. I'll be ready airly."

Sam Street's old wagon rattled off down the hill over cobble stones and under the big mulberry tree at the barn-yard gate where it disturbed the notorious crowd of "razor-backs" taking an afternoon snooze, and on over the little raise beyond, and out of sight.

Old Henry Boggs went back into the house fuming about "them town fellers being so cussed onery," to Mrs. Boggs.

"Marthy, ef I wus so gol durned small as t' trade my principles fer an office, I jest think I'd pizen myself an' have ye feed me t' the shoats. Blame me, ef I wouldn't!"

"Why, Henry! what on airth is the matter with ye now?"

Then followed an account of the conversation with Sam Street. He had finished his talk and had taken up the paper again when he remembered his letter.

"Gosh, Marthy! I got a letter here Sam Street brought out, an' I jest 'bout fergot it."

"Well, I guess ye did fergit, Henry. 'Pears t' me yer gittin' mighty fergitful uv late."

"That's a fact! That's a fact, Marthy, I am, shore 'nough."

He tore open the letter very deliberately, saying, "Spose this is some advertisin', ez I don't know who else'd be writin' t' me."

"Sufferin', bleedin' Moses! Ef this don't beat the whole world. Marthy, did ye ever hear uv anything like it? How on airth that gal know'd its us, beats all. Sufferin'—," but Mrs. Boggs stopped him. "Henry, I jest believe yer gittin' more childish every day. Read it, an' don't excite me so by yer palaverin'."

Bless yer sweet face, Marthy, ef it ain't a wonder! Jest listen t' this," and Henry read the following letter:

To Mr. Henry Boggs,
Cowville, Ill.

My Dear Friend: Your very kind and considerate letter containing a draft for $250.00 came promptly to hand Saturday. You can scarcely appreciate the great happiness your letter has brought to me. Not on account of the money so much, as the loving sympathy and friendship you extend to me. I hope you will understand the gratitude I feel for this encouragement, for I cannot begin to express it in writing. You and your dear wife must have great, noble, loving hearts, to be able to take me in thus—an almost

total stranger to you. I must come to see you so I can thank you in person for your great kindness to me.

I will keep the loan, because I know it will make you happy, and I am glad to tell you it will greatly aid me also.

May I come to see you sometime?

With love and good wishes to you both, I am your friend forever. JULIA HOWE.

"Well, bless the gal's heart, Marthy. Ain't that a nice letter, though?"

"I must say she is a lady, Henry. I'm mighty glad ye sent her the money. Read that part over agin, Henry, where she speaks 'bout our 'lovin' hearts'."

Henry read it over again, but even that was not quite enough, so dear old Mrs. Boggs came over to Henry's side and leaned her arm on his shoulder while they both pored over the letter together for a long time. It was so good to them, they feasted on the thoughts of it for many days. Having no children of their own, the little love and tenderness they had known in their lives had been limited to their affections for each other. This made the letter to them a great treat.

But it remained a nine-days' wonder to them how Julia knew who sent her the money.

XXXV.

The next morning, bright and early, Sam Street and old Henry Boggs drove to Cowville, and called on Silas at his office. There was little time wasted on greetings and the main issue was brought up at once by Mr. Boggs.

"Well, Silas, Sam an' me come in here t' see ye 'bout this guvnor business. Now jest tell us how the land lays an' what ye recommend."

"It is simply this, gentlemen: John Wilson, whom Thompson defeated for the nomination, is playing the baby act. He has wanted to be governor for years, and has worked every detail to that end here among his friends. We went to Springfield for him, as you know, and stood by him as long as there was any hope. He was defeated simply because he didn't get enough votes, and fairly, too. He came home sore about it, and has organized a bolt against Thompson, and so far no one has undertaken to stop it. He has Charley Williams, Lafe Young, and one or two other minor politicians here helping him. They are working it with the Republicans and offering their votes for governor if the Republicans in turn will support their local ticket. As things stand now, though the town is really democratic, they will carry it for the Republican candi-

date for governor. There is one thing I have hopes of doing, and that is this: If you men say the word, and stand by me in it, we can make these fellows 'back-water,' or else lay them on the shelf next year in the county election. Lafe Young wants to be clerk, and Charley Williams sheriff, and both stand a fair show for getting what they want. I don't think Wilson wants an office, but he is so far the biggest man in the party and he has promised his influence to these fellows for their dirty work against Thompson. He thinks they can defeat Thompson here without openly fighting him. Wilson is quiet, personally. Now we three, Henry Boggs, Sam Street, and Si Cobb, can make a combination that will defeat them either in the convention or in the county election. If we can agree to stand together against these fellows, I think I can bring them to support Thompson. What do you say to it?"

"What do we say?" retorted Mr. Boggs. "Ye have already said the word, Si. Sam an' me have agreed aforehand that this is the correct policy. We will have t' show them fellers that other townships kin bolt as well as Cowville when it becomes necessary t' chastise party leaders. I'm fer it strong."

"So am I," said Sam.

"So am I," said Silas.

Accordingly the great triumvirate was formed.

Candidate Thompson had heard what his opponent in the convention was doing, and had been in correspondence with Central Committeeman Smith, but that gentleman had failed to reconcile Wilson, and so reported it to Mr. Thompson the very day the triumvirate was formed. That same afternoon Silas strolled down to Wilson's law office and sat down for a visit. He and Mr. Wilson were good friends and often chatted with each other, but such a thing as Silas having any word in the councils of the party had never occurred to Mr. Wilson. "He was a nice, quiet, young fellow, but—". So when Silas bluntly raised the subject, he was surprised.

"I understand you are against Thompson, Mr. Wilson."

"Well, I can't say that I am except as some of the boys here urge that we put more effort on our city and county ticket, and that I approve."

"It's a little extraordinary, isn't it, Mr. Wilson, to treat the head of the ticket in that sort of manner? Besides, I understand that you have ordered Charley Williams and Lafe Young to actually trade the head of the ticket for votes for local officers."

"That's my business, Mr. Cobb, I think."

"It's not the business of the leader of the party to bolt a regularly nominated ticket, Mr. Wilson, and I think you are doing wrong in doing it."

"I really don't need your advice, sir. I have been in politics more years than you are old, and you should get your orders from me, and not be too officious."

"That is true, and you ought right now to be giving me advice on how to help Thompson to be elected governor; instead of that you are doing your best to defeat him. I am young and have much to learn, but I have already learned that our leader is not at present doing his exact duty."

"Oh, is that so? Well, I will not go to you to find out what my duty is."

"I think you make a mistake, Mr. Wilson, in growing angry and offering offense to me. I assure you of the kindliest feeling on my part. You ought not to sneer at my services because I am young and lack experience. I have much energy which can be utilized to advantage, and you ought, as a party leader, to try to organize such energy as mine for the party's good."

"I can do very well, I think, Mr. Cobb, so your energy will not be needed yet."

"All right, Mr. Wilson, you can send for me or call on me in case you change your mind. Good-day, sir."

Just outside the door he met Lafe Young and Charley Williams coming in, and he stopped them. "Say, you are the men I want to see right

this minute. Come this way," and he ushered them into the office of the City Hotel.

"Now, to come to the point bluntly and in a hurry, I will say that I have just had a talk with Wilson, and he has treated me very badly, considering that I am right, and he is wrong. You fellows are making a mistake in toadying to Wilson's revenge on this governor business, and it's going to hurt our future standing in State conventions. Give this county to the Republican nominee, and what will the State say about that sort of doll play? I tell you right now it's bad, bad as can be, and I hope you gentlemen will turn your efforts to holding the party in line for Thompson."

"Oh, I tell you, Cobb, you'd better let men like Wilson alone, and not be dipping into something you are not used to. Your long suit is with schools and schoolma'ams. On those things we bow to you. Now don't you think so?" This was from Lafe Young.

"It may be, Mr. Young, that I am not up to your class yet in politics, but I can tell a square deal when I see it, and you are not engaged in one now."

"Oh, is that so?"

"Yes sir, I am sure of it."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

Silas reflected a moment, and coolly replied:

"I shall do my best to defeat you for nomination next year for clerk, and if I fail in that I shall try equally hard to defeat you for election. This also applies to Mr. Williams' ambition for sheriff."

"Listen to that, Williams!"

"I hear," said Williams, smiling.

"I hope you won't deceive yourselves, gentlemen," replied Silas.

"Oh no, Mr. Cobb, it only amuses us to think of an office-holder who will want a re-election trying to work off a bluff like that," remarked Mr. Williams.

Silas got just a little out of patience on account of their failure to understand his motives and sincerity, so he turned to them rather bruskly, and said:

"I have done my best to talk with you as I would with men, and had a right to expect the same courtesy from you. Instead of that I meet with a lack of sincerity and with an air of importance and arrogance unbecoming you. Now to make an end of it, I will say this to you frankly and without a particle of enmity toward either of you; that in case you do not carry this town for Thompson, I shall use every effort I can possibly muster to defeat you both next year; and to show you that I am not alone in this, I have just left Sam Street and Henry Boggs who are to back me

up in it. I don't think you can carry Brush county without Muddy Creek's vote, do you?"

At the mention of these names both men became uneasy and began to squirm.

"You don't mean to say that Muddy Creek would bolt the ticket, do you?" said Lafe Young.

"Don't you think they would make as good bolters as you do?" replied Silas.

Neither said a word but looked down at their feet. They knew full well what Muddy Creek vote meant, and besides that, they somehow felt Silas Cobb wasn't to be fooled with, and backed by Sam Street and Henry Boggs he would be a big factor.

"Please let us understand the proposition I make so there will be no hard feelings in the future," continued Silas. "The town is safely democratic. Thompson has no enemies here except Wilson. If he does not carry the town, then it is his fault. Therefore, I shall charge it to you, and will absolutely spare no effort in defeating you for any office you may apply for. If, on the other hand, Thompson gets the full party vote, I shall keep hands off and will probably support you both in the convention."

"Well, we will think it over, Silas. We don't want to get into any war with you, and really we are doing this more to please Wilson than anything else, but if you and your friends stood for

us, I think we could afford to offend Wilson, but his influence could knock us out of the nominations unless we had other strength to put against it."

"You are better defeated than to get a nomination by such methods. If my election came up this fall I would act just as I am. Such methods as you are pursuing will ruin any party. Politics, to be successful, in my opinion, ought to be run on business principles. Rotten politics will fail as quickly as rotten business principles."

The result of this interview put a new power into local politics that had not been felt before. Young and Williams went back to Wilson's office and laid the matter before Wilson. That worthy swore a great deal, and ended by sending down town for old Henry Boggs and Sam Street. When these gentlemen appeared Wilson was all smiles, and greeted them very cordially.

"What is this I hear Sam, that you and Henry, two of the oldest and staunchest Democrats in the county are talking of bolting the ticket unless Thompson carries the town? I told the boys there was nothing in it."

"I guess ye air mistaken this time, Mr. Wilson," said Sam Street.

"That's what ye air, John. By the bleedin' Moses! You fellers needn't think we air goin' t' stand by an' see ye cut Thompson an' not resent

it. This here town is always foolin' 'round an' won't play ef ever'thing don't suit it. We jest told Si Cobb t' do what he thought wus right by the ticket, an' we would stand by him even ef we had t' vote fer a Republican t' do it. An' blame me ef we don't do it!" This from old Henry Boggs.

John Wilson saw that the deal was off. He could not carry it without losing prestige, and he could not afford to break with men like these, so he said:

"Well, I'll tell you, Henry. I am going to see to it myself that Thompson carries this town. I will make it a special point to carry it for him, for I don't want people to think I am sore because he defeated me for the nomination."

"Bully fer you, John. That's the way to talk it," said Boggs. "That's right," said Wilson. And Lafe Young and Charley Williams both said with a vim: "You bet yer life, that's the thing!"

Silas had scored. From that day on he surely would be considered in all political moves. He did not believe, as most people do, that to be successful in politics a man must be dishonest. He believed that honesty of purpose, and faithful fulfilment of pledges were as essential to success in politics as in business. He practiced what he believed always. When he exerted himself for a

candidate or principle, he always had a good reason to present for his actions.

As the year progressed he gradually added new friends to his old ones. He soon found that he had an acquaintance among his school officers that would some day prove useful in case he ever had to use it to right some wrong.

In visiting schools he always made it a point to meet his school directors and talk over the work with them. Each officer became a friend and looked to Silas for advice on all school affairs, and those of his political faith looked to him for their cue at the conventions.

The campaign waxed warm, and Silas kept one eye on Lafe Young and Charley Williams, and the other on John Wilson. He wanted positive evidence if any treachery was intended toward the head of the ticket. But after much cautious inquiry he was satisfied that there was no intention of carrying out their original program.

When the votes were counted, the candidate for governor ran even with the other candidates, and both Mr. Young and Mr. Williams called Silas' attention to this fact, and asked him if he were now satisfied. He assured them he was, and that in all probability he and his friends would support them.

When Silas was left alone he thought to himself, "They might be worse and they might be better.

I suppose if a man supports the best men who offer their services, he is to be excused even if they are not extra good men."

XXXVI.

Just before the holidays Silas was getting his work in shape so he could attend the State Teachers' Association at Springfield. He had not seen Professor Littleman for a long time and had almost forgotten that such a man existed, when he appeared on the scene one afternoon and asked for some programs of the meeting. Silas treated him cordially and matters passed off between them fairly well, considering their past relations. The Professor was going to attend the meeting and wanted to examine the program in advance. He glanced over it, as he sat near Silas, without comment until he came to the "Superintendent's Section." He found that Silas Cobb was down for the discussion of a paper on the gradation of schools.

"Oh," he said, and a cynical smile played over his face, "I see you are going to tell them how to grade schools."

"No sir, you are mistaken. I am not going to do anything of the kind. I am not responsible for my name being on the program at all, and it is there in spite of my protest. I know very little about the actual practice of grading, but I have my ideas which I shall undoubtedly present to the association for what they are worth. I

shall label them properly so no one will misunderstand the amount of experience back of them. Superintendent Ed Smith insisted that I should take this part."

"Oh, I've no doubt you will do well, Mr. Cobb, but I advise you to keep clear of that Ed Smith. That fellow is utterly bad. He uses all sorts of slang and he does not show proper respect for the experience of his superiors. He is too rash and foolhardy. Year before last he was absolutely insulting to Superintendent Blackhead at the State meeting, and he even made a dig at me, too, but I just sat down upon him, figuratively speaking, so he let me alone after that. But Blockhead was very much offended at Smith's ugly talk."

Silas laughed heartily. "Yes," he said, "I was there and heard you and Blockhead dress him down. I enjoyed it very much. So did Smith, I think." Another hearty laugh followed this.

"Oh, you heard that, did you?" asked the Professor, with a sickly smile playing around his thin lips.

"Yes," said Silas, "I was there and heard it all, and I am frank in saying to you that I like Superintendent Ed Smith very much, and if I can do my work here as fearlessly and as well as he is doing his, I shall be pretty well satisfied. He is a man

with large ideas and as brave as a lion. These two qualifications make a real big man, Professor, and I am very sorry you do not like Ed. He has often spoken of you to me, and I rather thought you had quite a respect for his ability."

"I have, in a way, but he is too fresh for me. I don't like these young upstarts who think they know so much. But I must be going. I will see you in Springfield." And, with a good-bye, he was gone.

Silas sat at his desk smiling in quite a reminiscent manner for some time after the Professor had gone. He was going over that scene again in which Ed Smith had metaphorically skinned Superintendents Blockhead and Littleman at Springfield in the debate on grading country schools. No wonder the Professor didn't feel kindly toward him. The cut smarted yet.

At Springfield Silas met many acquaintances he had made the year before, and took great pleasure in exchanging experiences with them. Ex Superintendent Littleman was there, too, greeting his friends and acquaintances of sixteen years' standing; also those he had made in more recent years. He felt sad to think he was not a member any more by virtue of his office, but he sat through the sessions as usual, and now and then he would rise and apologize to the president and superin-

tendents for intruding his remarks on them, as he was not a member, etc.

Matters had gone on for a time in this manner, and Superintendent Cobb had finished his discussion on grading, in which he stated briefly the result of his work. He had introduced a course of study, and was pleased to report that every teacher was following it, and that the results were very satisfactory, and so on and so forth.

When he had finished, Professor Littleman got up, cleared his throat, smiled sweetly at Mr. Cobb, and apologetically addressed the chairman. "I am very much interested in Superintendent Cobb's remarks, and am in hearty accord with him and his work. He is doing as much as any man could do, and I hope the superintendents will not think I am opposed to Mr. Cobb, but with due apology to that gentleman, I must say the result of his efforts are not what they seem to him. I have visited a few schools, myself, where Mr. Cobb thinks the results are splendid, and in those schools the teachers have misled him as to the course of study. They have not followed it at all, but knowing him to be so earnest about it, they led him to believe they have. On the other hand, those teachers who have followed his advice find themselves so confined and shut in that they have no heart in their work. An outsider can see this so much better than the superintendent can,

because teachers will frankly say to outsiders how they feel about it. In my sixteen years in the office I never found it necessary to use a course of study. It was always an interference with the individuality of the teacher."

"Mr. President," said Superintendent Cobb, "I am greatly surprised and displeased with the course my predecessor has taken on this subject. I remember he took just this position two years ago when Superintendent Smith was giving his experiences. I think, no doubt, the gentlemen present then will remember the incident. (Much applause and laughter.) One of these teachers whom Mr. Littleman talked to about the matter was in my office a short time afterwards, and told me that the Professor was greatly opposed to the use of a course of study, and tried to get her not to use it. Another one, and still another called and told me the same story. So I am afraid that Mr. Littleman has gotten his own opinion mixed up with that of the teachers. It is not my disposition to argue with Mr. Littleman, but I have had to work against his influence ever since I took up the work in Brush county. One would think that he would be satisfied to let my plans work out their own destruction, as he has often assured us was the ultimate end of such a policy. But he insists on lending a helping hand to the laws of Nature.

"I would like for Mr. Littleman, or any other gentleman present who holds the same views, to tell me how the individuality of a teacher is affected by the use of a course of study? Can she teach history less capably because the course of study lays out the work into years and gives the teachers a consecutive outline to follow through the whole school life of the child? Can she not use any method she chooses in teaching this subject? The course of study simply divides the work into years and months, so the proper amount will be done in all the branches of study. It seems to me that no person, after a single moment's reflection, would advance such an objection."

"It not only seems so," added Superintendent Ed Smith, "but it is so. You show me a man in this room holding such a theory, and I will attempt to demonstrate to this convention, by examining him on the course of study, that he never gave it even a casual examination, and does not even understand the aim and object of it. For my part I am getting tired of coming up here every year and wasting time with Littleman, Blockhead and others, who are too lazy to learn the a, b, c's of the work, expecting us fellows to pound it into them." (Much applause and loud laughter.)

Littleman and Blockhead were both furious, but they were afraid of Ed Smith's examination and sharp words, so they kept still. They knew if

they said a word he would proceed to bring out the illustration he promised the audience.

The discussion on Superintendent Cobb's paper on grading schools was taken up by Superintendent Smith and others. Much stress was placed on the value of making a proper record, at the close of each term, of the work done by each class to be left for the inspection of patrons or the superintendent, but the main object being to enlighten the succeeding teacher on the nature and quantity of work done by her predecessor. Thus a new teacher could proceed without loss of time or confusion with the regular class work of the school—every grade being already properly organized. Superintendent Smith claimed that in his county his people had not only been greatly benefited by a continuous organization of the schools from year to year, and a corresponding increase in the advancement of the pupils, but thousands of dollars had been saved annually in time usually wasted in organizing the schools, and finding out what work the pupils were capable of doing. Thus each teacher, having no former record of classes, would consume about one week's time in getting his school well under way, and a hundred teachers would waste one hundred weeks, an item of great importance to the pupils in time, and the taxpayers in money. He recommended that the superintendents ask their county commissioners

for an appropriation of a sufficient sum for providing each school with a proper record for showing the progress of the classes. By this method the superintendent could have reports made to him on the subject, and he would be brought in closer touch with the real work of grading the schools. Any errors could be pointed out, and assistance given the teachers in the work of gradation. It seemed as useless to attempt to run a school properly without records as to conduct the business of a bank or any other corporation without them.

XXXVII

In January Silas Cobb started on his rounds of school visiting again, and spent the next two months at it.

In the course of a long week's work he had not found anything of sufficient interest to note until he reached the last schoolhouse on his trip back to Cowville. In fact, he found some schools so exact and monotonous that he felt like taking a nap in the midst of the work. There are teachers you can neither commend nor criticize. They are between wind and water and belong to the great average.

But on Friday afternoon Silas found one sufficiently bad to keep him alive to his duty. The teacher, Miss Winterset, was one of those sharp, irritable, overbearing girls who have poor judgment, and no patience. Silas happened in while she was drilling a lad on the word "cat." After her greeting, she went about the task anew. In the first place the boy sat fully half across the room from the teacher and the chart, and Miss Winterset, with a pointer laid on the word "cat," called out in a sharp, penetrating voice calculated to embarrass the boy, "Now, Johnny, what word is this?"

Johnny didn't answer.

"Johnny, what is that word?"

Johnny didn't say a word.

"Don't you know what c-a-t spells?"

He never told if he knew, and it is not supposed that he knew, as he had never seen the word "cat," and this was his first week at school. In a louder and more irritated tone she repeated:

"What does c-a-t spell?"

Still he sat flushed and silent.

"Johnny, don't you know what c-a-t spells?" By this time she was angry, and showed every indication of wanting to shake the lad. The whole school was now intently interested in the situation, and the poor little fellow, feeling all eyes centered upon him, was on the verge of crying. Now angry and red in the face at the boy's stupidity in not understanding what seemed to her a self-evident fact, she called out again:

"Johnny, what does c-a-t spell?"

If the lad had had the courage to say what it really seemed to him to spell, he would probably have replied, "Sāt," as he knew no other sound of "c" and "a" than their natural ones, as he had learned them in the alphabet. But he never said a word and sat there full of fear, or fight, it is a question which. She finally gave up defeated, and impressively said:

"That word spells 'cat.'"

She was using the a b c method, so she now

turned to the alphabet and began to test him on his letters.

Silas heard the same style of recitation until

"That word spells 'cat.'"

school closed, and he planned to go carefully over the ground with her and see if he could not

help her. The work was simply bad and he didn't hesitate to say so.

"Have you any criticism to offer on my work, Mr. Cobb?" she asked in a manner indicating that she was proud of her independent bearing and the courageous front she always presented to her school.

"Yes, I have a few suggestions to make, Miss Winterset."

"Oh! is that so?" she replied, rather challengingly.

"Your chart class—your method in handling that work—is not quite right, I think, and I would suggest you combine some of the later methods of instruction with your present idea. You jump from nothing to the word "cat," and expect the child to recognize the word as an old friend, when it is really unlike anything he has ever seen, and its appearance and spelling does not sound like "cat" to him. This is wrong, and you——"

By this time Miss Winterset was getting angry again, and was taking the criticism very badly, and interrupted Silas by the unreasonable remark, "I don't see why."

"What do you refer to?" asked Silas.

"Why, what you're talkin' about."

"What is it you don't see why about, Miss

Winterset? I can't do anything with a statement like that!"

"Well, about my method."

"Your method is out of date and based on a wrong principle. That is the whole trouble. No advanced teacher uses that method. They use the phonetic word method, or a combination of various methods, but no advanced teacher uses the a b c method, pure and simple, any more."

"I don't believe it," she retorted.

"It is immaterial to me, Miss Winterset, whether you believe it or not. You seem to be as deficient in courtesy as you are in methods, and I fear you have not the proper elements for a teacher, anyway. A real teacher ought to be kind and persuasive; this you are deficient in, as shown by your method of handling the little boy. She ought to be even and sweet-tempered; you are irritable and bring out the bad that is in your school. She ought to be courteous and considerate; this you seem to be short in, also. She ought to be anxious to have help from those in a position to give help; you are weak in this, also, as you even go so far as to deny my statement of facts with which every teacher ought to be conversant.

"Now, these are a few points in your character, which I see at a glance, that make you unfit to teach school. Your school board told me you

showed this same spirit to them when they offered suggestions to you. I wanted to make sure of it, and came to see for myself if their complaints were justified."

"Oh, you did, did you?"

"Yes, I did, and after you have finished out this term of two weeks, you may consider yourself out of the service. I will not revoke your certificate unless you apply for a school. I have no disposition to do you an injury, and am acting as I am, simply because you are not fitted for school-teaching. You can't help it, I suppose, being born that way. Some people are born with a talent for music, others for poetry, and so on around, and it isn't their fault. I am not angry with you, in the least. It is true you have acted badly and rudely disputed my word, but that is no affair of mine. You are master of your own conduct, and your acts, for good or ill, will recoil on yourself and not on me, and will bring you much trouble in the end without my added ill-will."

She stood stolid and ugly, and made no reply.

"I am sorry to see you feel that way, Miss Winterset. It is so perfectly useless, and leaves you in a worse state of mind each time you yield to it. Take the world as you find it, and don't bruise your body fighting against everything you are not in harmony with. When you see you are

wrong give up frankly, and every time you do you grow stronger and sow seeds of good fellowship, and make people love you. Life is too hard at best for us to go through it jostling each other. Now mark you, Miss Winterset, I don't say you shall never teach under me again. I mean you are not to teach until I give you permission. I must have proof of a decided change in your methods and your disposition. I ask this as no personal favor to me. I am simply doing what I think I ought to do. I owe it to the people no less than you do; so when you show me a different phase of yourself that is desirable in a teacher along the lines I have indicated, we can arrange a place for you then."

The pupils had all gone, and she and Silas stood all alone in the room, by her desk. She made no reply, and he seemed to have said all that was necessary.

"Good-bye, Miss Winterset," he said at last, after the silence had grown rather embarrassing, and as he said it he offered his hand to her. She did not see it, but muttered half below her breath something that sounded like "good-bye."

"I am sorry," said Silas, and walked out of the room. Such scenes to him were disagreeable in the extreme, and only extraordinary cases compelled him to act so abruptly, and with apparent harshness. His disposition was to avoid scenes of

any kind, and did always avoid them if possible. As he drove along on his way to town, he brooded over the situation, and tried to find fault with himself and pick flaws in his statements. Couldn't he have done this way or that, and was there any use of stopping her further teaching in the county? Wasn't it just a momentary display of temper on her part? It might have been her bad day; we all have them, and a little allowance ought to be made.

So he fought it out on both sides. For a time Silas Cobb would fight, then the other self would take a turn at it in defense of Miss Winterset. But all to no purpose.

In the meantime, as Silas was speeding on to Cowville behind Blaze-face, Miss Winterset was sitting at her desk wrestling with the old demon. For a long time she sat there and spat fire and brimstone, as it were, at Silas Cobb. No thought came to her excited mind mean enough to satisfy her. Time went on, however, just the same, and the little dollar-and-a-half tin-back clock ticked off the minutes just as though Miss Winterset were not in a rage. An hour had gone by since Silas left, and still she sat there. Another hour went, and long before it was gone the little schoolhouse was wrapped in the shadows of an early winter night. She didn't seem to know or care. She only sat there and thought and thought. But

in time her blood cooled, and the room grew cold also. The silence and the darkness seemed to soothe her irritated mind, and at last she laid her

"The silence and the darkness seemed to soothe her."

head on her arm that rested on her desk, and cried. Her obstinacy had burned out, and in its place pity for herself had crept in. She began to see how ugly she had been, and to regret that she had not shaken hands with him when he left. She could hear his quiet words yet, "I am sorry," as

he walked away. She wished he were back again. Then she felt lonesome, and grew afraid. She got up and put her little clock into a small basket in which she carried her lunch, and closed and locked the door. It was dark, and the night was cold and frosty, so when she got home she was trembling all over from cold and fright. She went straight to her room, and to bed without supper.

The next morning at school, Jimmy Sanders said to the first boy he met:

"Say, Sam, d' ye know teacher didn't get home las' night 'til 'way after dark, and she and the superintendent must have had a lot t' talk about, I guess."

"Gee whiz! 'Zat so?"

"Yes sir, 'tis, and she never eat no supper, and ma says her eyes was red when she come jist like she'd been a cryin'."

"Goodness, gracious! What 'd ye suppose the superintendent did to her?"

"Golly, I don't know! That's what ma asked, and pa smiled and winked at ma, and ma said she knowed better. Ye can't never tell nothin' about pa. He's alus teasin' ma, but I know the teacher was a cryin' las' night after she went t' bed, cause my bed's just next t' the wall and I could hear her."

By the close of the day it was understood by all

the pupils that the teacher and superintendent had remained at the schoolhouse until long after dark, and that the teacher got a good lecture, but the older heads at home changed the object of the late hour at the house, and made quite a delightful morsel of gossip out of it. From no foundation of fact whatever, a wonderful story was woven, and for a few weeks or months, it found its way into every mouth, and was soon forgotten or replaced, and Silas Cobb and Miss Winterset, wrapped in their own thoughts, never heard of it.

XXXVIII.

About 10 o'clock one morning, on his next trip to the country, Silas Cobb drove up to Oliver Scotland's school, and hitched Blaze-face to a near-by fence. Oliver spied him coming, and at once pulled down his vest, brushed back his bushy mustache, and stood up among his rubbish and dirty surroundings.

"Children," he said "we now have approaching us the Hon. Silas Cobb, Superintendent of Schools of Brush county." (Oliver was great on display.) "I see him now preparing to enter our school, one of the best, I should say, in this county. I want you to be on your good behavior, and make a special effort to not disgrace us by any untimely acts. Attention, now, to your work."

Oliver was a negative character, and he was never of one mind, so far as plans and their execution was concerned, long at a time. He had begged off from attending the institute in consideration of a solemn pledge to attend the teachers' meetings to make up for it. This Silas believed he had meant to do at the time, but "out of sight, out of mind" was Oliver's style, and he had not attended a single meeting up to the time of Silas' visit in February.

When Silas entered his schoolroom the first general impression he got (and it proved correct and lasting), was that of carelessness, and a sort of odor filled the air that is common to a lot of dirty boys and girls crowded into a schoolroom on a cold morning after they have become thoroughly warmed up. Behind the desk Oliver took his stand, and made a speech to the children for the benefit of the superintendent in the way of an introduction and welcome. His coat collar showed gray around the back of his neck, with grease thoroughly soaked in and nicely coated with dandruff. The front of his vest, coat and trousers were polka-dotted with dusty grease-spots. In short, he wasn't clean, neither was his school. By his desk was a box of sawdust—not clean sawdust, but the sawdust of ages, measured by the uses made of sawdust in such places. His desk was littered with many things, and the dust of the year had accumulated in plenty upon it between the books and papers.

The door-casings, desks and furniture were all greasy and dirty. It is safe to say the floor had never been scrubbed, and absolutely certain that the woodwork had never been washed. It was also reasonably certain that the teacher and his pupils had not bathed their bodies during the year.

After the school had partially recovered from

the reception of the superintendent, Oliver announced that he would now call his advanced arithmetic class. This class had recited, but he wanted Mr. Cobb to witness the swift work of these particular pupils.

"What year's work is this class doing, Mr. Scotland?" inquired Superintendent Cobb.

"We ain't doin' no particular year, Mr. Cobb. This class is workin' independent from any course of study."

"Yes, I should judge so," replied Mr. Cobb.

"Now, boys and girls," continued Oliver, "we want to show the superintendent some rapid calculation in —" A boy in the back seat punctured Oliver's remarks with a loud snap of his fingers, and held up a dirty hand. "Well, what is it, Sam?"

"A-l-l-e-g-h-e-n-y!" drawled out the boy, a chocolate colored finger following the letters as he spelled the word.

"That's Allegheny, Sam. I've told you twice to-day how to pronounce that word."

"Now, then, class! Quick! Ready! Who can git through first? What's the intrust on $750.50 at 6 per cent for 2 years, 1 month and 10 days? Now lively there!" And the chalk clattered on the blackboard at a terrific rate. It was a mad race to see who would finish first. Flushed with pride, Oliver stood at his desk watching the pro-

ceedings, and urging them on. The school stopped the preparation of lessons and entered into the exercise with avidity. Finally Oliver observed

"It was a mad race to see who would finish first."

that this exhibition of lightning calculation was interfering with the preparation of lessons. "Git

to work there, children; don't be wastin' your time that-a-way."

Then seven different pupils snapped their fingers, and Oliver called out one after another for the questions, and answered them in a loud, pulpit-toned voice.

In a very short time the class had finished its problem, and one after another of the first ones to finish whirled around with the expression, "I am through, teacher," "Me, too," and so on.

"Now, Superintendent Cobb," spoke Oliver, in a tone of pride, "you will see that we have learned to do things in a hurry, here. Rapidity is what the business world wants. Would you like to ask the class questions on the work?"

Silas accepted the invitation, and proceeded to examine the pupils. He discovered, as he expected, that they had been taught a formula of cancellation by rote, and knew absolutely nothing about the principle involved in the subject. He was not long in making this point apparent to the class. But Oliver declared in a bluster that they *knew*, but were bothered and embarrassed. While the recitation was in progress, pupils all over the room continued to interrupt it with questions, and the teacher, apparently, did not seem to think anything about it. All through the forenoon he waded through his work in much the same manner. His ambition to make a big dis-

play drowned out everything that was good in his school, and was developing the same qualities in his pupils.

At noon, while the pupils were eating their lunches, Silas began his pruning task.

"Mr. Scotland, I don't want to be unnecessarily harsh, and what I say to you I want you to consider in a good spirit, for my sole aim is to help the work along. Before we begin I would like to see your register of classes and your course of study."

"Say, now, I am sorry about that, but I just don't believe I have made out my register yet, but the course—let me see—where is that? Well, now I come to think of it, I left it at the hotel in Cowville the day you gave it to me at the teachers' institute—when you excused me from attendance; and, by the way, Superintendent Cobb, that was very kind of you, too. I've told several people here about how good you were to me, and every one of them said it was just like you. I tell you, I have kept things in good shape out here for you politically."

"Of course that is well enough for me, Oliver, but this neglect on your part is all wrong, and I am going to hold you to account for it. Now, look at the situation: I have been preaching a whole year about this course of study. I have demanded its use in every school. You have had

no less than five circular letters sent you about its use, and I never thought it possible that any teacher in this county would be guilty of wilful neglect. Besides that, when I was here before I told you to make out your register promptly at the beginning of every term, showing the organization of your school. This you have also ignored. Here the year is almost closed, and not a thing done in either case. These alone, Mr. Scotland, are causes sufficient for revoking your certificate, if I had no other reasons."

"What's the difference about the course of study—that don't tell a feller how to teach a school, and as to the register, I know all about the school, and what's the use to write it down?" replied Oliver.

"Why didn't you say that to me last year, so I could have stopped all this trouble at once, instead of pretending to me you were so enthusiastic over it? The very idea of you presuming to ignore my absolute instructions to you on this matter is provoking, to say the least."

"Oh, you take the matter too seriously, Superintendent Cobb. You ought to concede something to me, and take into account my good teachin'. That ought to be the main aim of your supervision, anyway. I've had lots of experience, I can tell you."

Silas looked at him and his contempt changed into pity for the fellow's ignorance.

"Oliver Scotland," said Silas impressively, and with great seriousness, "I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you must be disillusioned or you never will amount to anything in your life. Now, listen closely to what I am going to say. You are, to my personal knowledge, the most incompetent teacher in Brush county. In addition to that, you are the most slovenly in your personal appearance, and keep the dirtiest schoolroom, and can show the most untidy pupils of any teacher I ever saw or read about."

"What—what on earth have I done to merit such abuse?" retorted Scotland, now red in the face.

"Nothing," was Silas' reply. "Nothing but blow and bluster, Mr. Scotland, that is all; and pray keep your voice down. We don't want the school to hear this talk. I am talking to you for your benefit, and if you are sensible you will heed my advice."

"You are, eh? Well, I can tell you now the people of this district will see whether you can come out here and slander their school. Dirtiest lot of pupils you ever saw, are they? I like that, don't you, children?" His voice fairly rang with anger. The pupils heard his statement in full.

Silas had gone a little too far in his statement,

not for truth's sake, but for the sake of diplomacy. Oliver's love for display was too strong for him, and he indulged himself before he could help it. It was a grand opportunity to array his little empire against Superintendent Cobb, and it seemed at that moment to him, in his anger, that he would need strong backing to save himself.

Silas leaned over the desk until his face was within a foot of Oliver's, and as he did so he laid his hand on his arm with a grip of iron, and said, in cold, sharp tone, "Shut up."

The effect was simply electrical. Oliver sank back in his chair white with fear, and the cold perspiration stood on his forehead. What he saw in that look, and what he felt in every sense he had was sufficient to bring him to a state of collapse.

Silas turned to the pupils and said:

"Children, I don't want you to be frightened at this little scene here. Mr. Scotland is not feeling well to-day, and he is now sorry for his outbreak of temper. I have decided that he needs a little rest and change from his work, and this being Thursday, the week is about gone, anyway, so I will take the liberty of dismissing you until next Monday. I am not quite sure, but I think there will be a new teacher here Monday. You may take your wraps and go home now. I will come to see you next Monday, when I hope to give you

a pleasant talk, and introduce to you one of the best lady-teachers I can find. Good-bye to you all."

They filed out of the room amid great excitement, and hurried home. As they left the room Silas saw the children of the directors and sent word for them to come to the schoolhouse at once.

Oliver still sat rooted to his chair, scarcely comprehending what was happening. When the pupils were gone Silas told him to eat his lunch while he took his horse to a near-by house to be fed, and to get his own dinner. He would return and meet him and the board.

At 2 o'clock Silas drove up to the schoolhouse and found all the directors present. Oliver had told his story, leaving out the incriminating part of it. The board was in a rage, and Silas found himself liable to a personal assault from them. Oliver was a favorite among them, and a local politician of some note. On account of their ignorance and simplicity, they were not able to see through his veneer of boasting and story-telling. Silas had scarcely cleared the threshold before they were all talking at once. They were German-Americans, and the leader of them was a high-tempered, unreasonable man, and he was shaking his fist in Silas' face before greetings were fairly exchanged. Silas' traditional coolness came near forsaking him here. It was a delicate

situation, and whether his act would produce peace or war was a question. He had made one mistake. He would not be hasty this time. He would use argument. That was what he meant to do, but when the leader of the revolt touched his chin with his dirty fist in his wild gesticulations, he caught his wrist in his grip and brought it down with a twist, and in a loud, clear voice he shouted: "Sit down! You don't know what you are talking about. Sit down, all of you."

They got into their seats, still muttering, and the cold sweat came out on Oliver's brow again.

"Now, gentlemen, I am ready to explain the situation. You should have saved your demonstration until I had finished. It never pays to be hasty as I, myself, have learned over and over again. A year or more ago Mr. Scotland here was at our institute when we organized our teachers' association for the year. He opposed the plan vigorously. This, too, in the face of the fact that he needed the help of these meetings, his standings on examination being too low to entitle him to a certificate. But on account of his long experience I let him through on probation. I told him then that he must make good his grades before this year's work closed. He knew what to expect. I came out here to see him, and find that he has not complied with a single requirement made by my office. He does not keep his

records, nor does he follow the course of study. These things, however, could be overlooked if he were an excellent teacher, but I want to say to you, gentlemen, that he is the most incompetent teacher I ever saw, anywhere. Your pupils do not understand half the stuff he pretends to teach them. I have examined them, and know this to be a fact. Another thing which I dislike to mention to you, but which is a very important matter, is that he is not tidy in his dress and personal appearance. He does not keep himself clean, nor does he try to keep his schoolroom or pupils clean. I beg of you to look at this room. Step up here and look at his desk. Is not your barn just as clean? Is a man a true teacher of little children who will live in such filth?

"I revoked his certificate an hour ago for general incompetency, and I assumed the responsibility of dismissing the school because I didn't suppose the school board would want to pay his salary personally, as no school money can be used to pay his wages from now on. It was not my intention, gentlemen, to act so abruptly in this matter, but to be frank with you, I made the mistake of telling Mr. Scotland the plain truth without due regard as to how it might make him feel. The result of my act was to arouse his anger and his bad breeding led him to raise his voice so the entire school was aware of his

trouble. This fact led me to act at once, as no greater damage could be done to the school than for him to continue teaching for the remainder of the week.

"I think I have just about covered the ground so far as Mr. Scotland is concerned. These boys and girls are entitled to as good a teacher as any other school. You pay a good salary, and you ought to have good work. It is absolutely certain that your pupils have been positively damaged by the present teacher, and I feel that I am largely to blame for it. Out of sympathy for a few old-time teachers who could not pass the examination last year, I let them teach on probation, which, in Mr. Scotland's case, was a mistake. He did not try to improve. He even seemed not to care. I have no personal grounds for opposing him. If he knows of any defense he can offer you, he can now have the floor."

But Mr. Oliver Scotland seemed crushed, and only asked the question, "What's the use?"

"None, particularly, Mr. Scotland," replied Silas. "It is your privilege."

The school board had little to say. They seemed to lack ground to stand on, and all of them seemed satisfied that Silas was right about it. It ended by the board asking him to send them another teacher.

Silas knew that District No. 6, where Josephine

Alger taught, would close on Friday, so he drove direct to her schoolhouse. He laid the matter before her in all its disagreeableness, and asked her to take the school. Did she revolt at it, or inquire about her compensation and boarding place? No; these things did not appeal to her in this light. She only said, after Silas had finished: "The poor little dirty things! They need some one to love them, don't they? I would really like to go, but how could I? These people here will want me for the spring term, and I only have two weeks of vacation?"

"They will have to do without you, Miss Alger. Here is a school that is sadly in need of you. I could not find another teacher to fill that place. You are not needed here now so much. There are many teachers who can teach here, but there are none whom I can get fit to take up that work."

It ended by Miss Alger taking the school. She went like a soldier, where the fire was the hottest. Silas took her out in his buggy, and when the pupils had all gathered, he said:

"Children, I told you last week that I would introduce to you to-day the nicest and most lovable lady teacher I could find. I had no trouble in finding her, because I knew just where to look. This is Miss Josephine Alger, and where she came from you can find no one who does not

love her. Every boy and girl who ever knew her became her friend for life. I know you need some one to love you, and work with you. Some one whose heart is like yours, and whose soul is so great, and yet so tender, that little children who go to school to her are filled with love and high aims. That is why I brought you Miss Alger. I knew you needed a grand, good teacher more than any other school in the county, and because I was anxious to help you I have brought you the best teacher I ever knew Now I hope you will be good to her and love her as she deserves."

That was Silas' speech, and Miss Alger's heart being tender, her eyes were level full of tears when he finished. It wasn't a day for ceremony, so, after a short talk with Miss Alger, Silas left. He knew a third party would interfere with the work of the school. They would feel freer if left to themselves.

It was a wonderful thing the way that school shucked itself during that first week. The old, dirty house got its first bath, and the pupils saw a revelation. And it was all so jolly! No bluster nor brag now. It was all sunshine and smiles. The work was a pleasure, and in time they began to understand the reasons for what they did. The people at first stood aloof from Miss Alger, but it was only for a short time. The children in the end bore down every barrier, as they alway do for those they love.

XXXIX.

During the spring vacation four adjoining counties, including Brush, Hayes, Willow and Hitchcock, had a joint teachers' convention at Cowville. It had been planned by Superintendents Cobb and Ed Smith, and proved to be a very successful meeting. Superintendent Smith brought over in a body from his county about a hundred teachers; Brush county turned out in full force. Superintendent Slowly, at Sandy Crossing, came over with six of his teachers, while Superintendent Brown, from Oak Bluffs, came with a full dozen.

At the suggestion of Superintendent Slowly, who was still trying to decide the matter, the convention spent much time on the value of a course of study for country schools. It will be remembered that he had been getting opinions for some years past on the subject preparatory to adopting a course of study, and Superintendent Smith had told him in pretty strong terms what he thought of his methods.

After the meeting had closed and it seemed as if everyone had had all the discussion he needed for some time, Superintendent Slowly was still thirsting for more, so he managed to get the other three superintendents cornered in the church

where the meeting had been held, and, after due deliberation, solemnly asked this question:

"What do you men do with agents, solicitors for church funds, beggars, peddlers and ticket sellers who prey on you for your money?"

Ed Smith guffawed, Silas Cobb smiled, Mr. Brown giggled and Superintendent Slowly looked injured. Then they all tried to look serious, and Ed Smith answered first:

"I have the janitor cremate mine in the furnace."

They all laughed again, and Mr. Brown, a man of impulses, seriously began to explain his method:

"For my part I think I have an ideal way of disposing of them all to the best advantage. For instance, I pin a notice on the door casing, 'No book agents admitted,' and whenever one appears I take him by the arm and show him the notice. Then I go to my work without another word, looking very stern. If that doesn't suffice, I use sterner measures. Solicitors of church funds who are all residents of my county I greet cordially, and explain to them that I am solicited by everyone, and I have made a universal rule to give twenty-five cents, and give it to all alike. This lets me off cheaply, and no one's offended. The peddlers I fire right out without ceremony, as they don't belong in the county. The ticket sel-

lers for entertainments I placate by buying one, as a rule. I think it is a pretty good plan. At any rate it works well with me."

Superintendent Slowly looked amazed. Such summary methods were shocking to him.

"Why," he said, "you don't lose much time with them, do you? No longer than last week a fellow bothered me all day trying to sell me a patented inkwell, and some other stuff. Of course I treated him as well as I knew how, and he was going to sell it to me in spite of myself. But after he had spent about a day at it, he went off looking as if he had been defeated. But I never buy anything from anybody nor subscribe to anything. Just can't afford it; but I do waste a lot of time talking with them."

"Well, I don't agree with either of you gentlemen," said Superintendent Cobb. "I don't treat any of this class by set rules. I don't have any notices warning any one to keep away from my office. I say this with due respect to you, Mr. Brown, but I take it that my office is of a public character and open to the public If a book agent comes to me with a book, I am always glad to look at his wares. I am a lover of good books. Should he have anything that suited me, I would encourage him. He is a human being like myself, trying to make an honest living. Besides that, I may be greatly benefited

by contact with him. To illustrate my point, last week a gentleman called on me selling Johnson's Cyclopædia. His hair was half gray and he looked like a perfect gentleman. He was very gentlemanly in his address, and considerate lest he take my time without first getting my permission. He called at 9 o'clock A. M. and at bedtime he left me. It was all my fault; I kept him. He was the most interesting man I ever talked with, and I learned more in that day's talk with him than I ever learned from any dozen other men I ever knew. He was a graduate of Harvard, and had held high positions, so much above my poor little job that it must have all seemed mean and small to him, yet nothing of the kind could be detected in his manner. Now I want to ask you, Superintendent Brown, what would I have looked like taking that man by the arm, a total stranger to me, and pointing to a notice on my door, "*No book agents admitted?*"

"Well, that's just what I did with that same fellow," replied Brown, looking rather sheepish.

"You don't mean it," said Slowly.

"Surely you didn't," said Cobb.

"Brown, you're a fool," said Ed Smith.

"Why?" said Brown, now embarrassed.

"Nobody but a Democrat would do a thing like that, because he is too ignorant to know any better," laughingly retorted Smith.

"Be careful, Smith," replied Silas Cobb, smiling. "I might invite you outside," and as he said it he closed down on Smith's arm with so much cordiality that that impulsive gentleman screamed with pain. Silas' grip was something marvelous.

"But tell us what Canfield (that was the agent's name) said to you, Brown," continued Smith. "I am anxious to know if he thrashed you as you deserved?"

"Thrashed me? Well, I guess not. He bowed to me with an apology when I showed him the notice, and said he was 60 years old and had never yet thought to look for a warning of that sort on the door casing, and he hoped I would overlook his negligence in not seeing it. It was not his intention to intrude himself where he was not wanted, or something to that effect."

"And didn't you just now say he didn't thrash you, Brown?"

"Well, did he?" inquired Brown innocently.

"Well, all I have to say to that is you don't seem to know when you are licked. For my part, if a man like Canfield ever dealt me a blow like that, I wouldn't be able to manage another obstreperous school teacher for a whole year. I agree with Cobb about these matters exactly. There is only one rule to adopt—absolutely only one—and that one is this: Be a gentleman at all

times and under all circumstances, and assume every other man is a gentleman until you find he isn't. Every agent, peddler, fakir, solicitor, or any other old thing gets courteous treatment when he comes to my office. I let him sing me his song, that is, tell me his business. I give him a respectful hearing and limit the time. I never have any trouble about wasting time. All who call on me are comparatively clever people, and know when I am ready to quit, and they get out."

"Oh, well," said Brown, "I am going to quit the work anyway. Maybe I was hasty about it, but no use to cry about past mistakes. By the way, I haven't told you yet about my prospects of being elected to the presidency of Hoover College over in Indiana, have I? No? Well, I have every reason to believe I will be elected."

"What college is that?" asked Cobb.

"Hoover College at Colfax."

"Why, man alive! don't you know Canfield is president of the board of directors of that college?"

Brown turned pale and then red, and at last laughed a sickly laugh. "Is that really so?" he asked.

"Absolutely certain," replied Cobb.

"It shall be meted back to you measure for measure," quoted Smith, smiling at Brown's discomfiture.

"Well, say," Brown continued, "that's a good one on me. Do you suppose Canfield will hold that against me? Did he say anything about me to you, Mr. Cobb?"

"No, nothing disrespectful — only mentioned meeting you."

"Or to you, Smith?"

"Not a word. Canfield's a gentleman."

Immediately after the four men separated, Superintendents Brown and Slowly left on the first train, while Ed Smith and Silas went arm in arm to the latter's office. As they strolled along Smith broke the silence by saying: "Yes, I think Canfield will know how to vote when his board gets ready to select a president. Wouldn't it be an edifying spectacle to see as president of a college a man who has a mind like Brown's— hemmed in all around with a 'stake and rider' fence?"

"Yes," said Silas, "and isn't it an apt illustration of that old saying 'that chickens always come home to roost.' How nicely everything adjusts itself to conditions. There seems to be a perfect balance in every action. It is utterly impossible to escape this universal law of compensation. Brown is not broad enough for a college president, and his insult to Canfield will cost him the position. If every man could be taught this everlasting truth that there is no escape possible

from the results of his own acts, there would be much more thinking done before acting. Acts, good or bad, emanate from within us, and no matter whether committed in silence and alone, or in public, that never-ceasing law of compensation, like gravity, goes on with its leveling process, meting out measure for measure. Like death, there is no escape from it. If there happens to be no public act to bring about retribution from the outside at once, the process is going on just the same from within, and sooner or later evens up every account. Some master-characters in cunning and subterfuge live half of a life sometimes before the world discovers the workings of this law in a public exposure, but in the end it comes and the reckoning is made. It's the law of life, and to break it means to suffer."

"Silas, you are quite a philosopher. Where did you get all that stuff?"

"Learned it by experience."

"The only real school," commented Smith.

By this time they had reached the office, and, going in, comfortably seated themselves for a good visit. They had barely raised a subject for discussion when they heard heavy steps on the stairs, and a great deal of puffing and blowing, as if the climber was in distress and found the stairs difficult to ascend.

"Listen," said Silas.

"Regular tornado," remarked Smith.

"No, it isn't," corrected Silas. "It's Henry Boggs or his spook, and I'll wager two to one on it."

Sure enough. The door burst open and old Henry Boggs stepped in, noisy and elated.

"Howdy, Silas, my boy! Blame me, ef I ain't glad t' see ye, son. An' be this Ed Smith? Excuse me, sir, fer speakin' up, but Editor Smith, uv the *Herald*, told me ye wus with Silas. I am jest as glad as I kin be t' see ye both." He had Silas' hand in his right and Ed Smith's in his left, shaking them both vigorously.

"Yes, this is my friend, Ed Smith, and mighty glad I am to see you, Uncle Henry," replied Silas, smiling a real welcome to him.

"And I, too, Mr. Boggs," said Smith with warmth. "Silas, here, has told me enough about you to make a book, and a good one, too. I consider it a great honor to meet a man like you."

"Henry Boggs would make a good hero in any book," added Silas.

The old man swelled up with pride and genuine pleasure at the warmth of his welcome and the appreciation these two young, husky men showed him.

"Ye boys ort t' be ashamed uv yerselves, blowin' up an ole man like that. I'm too ole now t' stand much uv it, blame me ef I ain't! I git so

stuck up sometimes that Marthy tells me I am likely t' git a fall. She says t' me, 'Henry, them town fellers air ruinin' ye more an' more every year. They jest make ye think ye're somebody, when ye ain't. Ye're only ole Henry Boggs, an' I'm only ole Marthy Boggs, an' that's all there is t' it. We air jest ole, ignerant people, an' not fit t' go out with them town folks, who air edicated an' wear nice clothes. We jest don't know how, Henry. We've worked out our time, an' our ways jest growed in us. We can't change 'em any now.' An' I believed her, too, at the time, but ye young rascals knock it all out uv me, an' I begin t' git proud an' stuck up. So ye've got t' quit blowin' up the ole man. D'ye hear?"

"The trouble with you, Mr. Boggs," replied Smith, "if you won't object to my mentioning it, is, you are too modest to appreciate your own true value. Manners, or forms, and clothes do not make the man, as you know."

"Well, I should say not," interrupted Silas. "Why, Smith, do you know that it actually makes me feel badly to hear them talk that way. If to-day I had my choice of dining with the governor of this State or old Henry Boggs, I should dine with Boggs, and feel a greater honor, because I would feel that there sat a man who never deserted a friend; whose honor was never questioned; whose life is an open book; whose soul is

great and strong; and lastly, whose heart beats warm and true for me. Do you think I would exchange him for a governor, a president, or any one else, no matter what cut of clothes he wears or from what school he graduated? Well, I guess not!" ended Silas, with a rap of his ruler on the desk.

This was balm to Mr. Boggs' soul, and he almost forgot himself in the great emotion he felt. Had he been out in the barn-yard at home he might have diverted attention from his emotion by storming at the stock, but there was no chance for diversion there in that small office.

"Thank ye, son, fer yer kind words. Sufferin' Moses! but the wind is bad t'-day. I jest got my eyes full uv dust comin' in."

He took his handkerchief out and wiped his eyes. No one made any comment on the calmness of the atmosphere outside, and old Henry's embarrassment was passed over without apparent notice.

Silas soon discovered, however, that Mr. Boggs wanted to say something to him in private, so he said to Smith, "Please excuse us a moment, Ed. I want to send a little message to Mrs. Boggs," and he led the way into his private office.

"Well, Mr. Boggs, I am very glad to see you. How are you, anyway, and how is Mrs. Boggs?"

"Well as common, Silas, an' we air as happy as kin be over a little matter we're plannin'

now." His face lit up with pleasure as he went on.

"Ye see, Silas, son, the gal's goin' t' git home on vacation 'bout the middle uv June, an' she has writ the ole woman an' me an' told us she's comin' t' see us." By this time Silas understood whom he meant, so he let him go on without question. "The idee jest struck Marthy an' me that it would be mighty nice fer us ole folks ef we could have the gal an' the boy both there at the same time an' we'd have a big dinner fer 'em. Marthy says its jest the thing, an' we air jest buildin' big on the prospects uv it. She says t' me, 'Henry, it'd seem jest like they wus our own, wouldn't it? an' we kin jest play they air our own, an' there'll be jest us four at the table—ye at that end an' me at this, an' Silas will set there at that side, an' Julie will set here on this side, facin' each other.' An', Silas, do ye know the dear ole thing sat there an' let the tears come out, an' it's been many a day since that happened afore. It's a sad thing, Silas, not t' have no children t' love ye an' t' love, an' maybe that's why we cling to ye so hard, Silas, an' it maybe that's what made the tears come." He seemed to forget Silas' presence for a moment, and sat in a deep study while he turned back through the years like leaves of a book, hunting for some one back there in the silence among the dead things, and dreaming over it again. Then he

remembered that he lived in the present, and went on with his talk.

"The recollection is 'bout all an ole man has, Silas, an' when he's lived so long as I have, it becomes a wonderful thing. The long years help t' make entertainment fer many reflections on winter days when ye' can't git out. Ye mought not believe it now, Si, lookin' at me as I am, but when I wus a lad like ye, I wuz a mighty good-lookin' feller. An' Marthy! a more likely gal ye

never see. I wuz jest a thinkin' uv a time away back there when me an' Marthy wuz like ye an' Julie. It seems t' me now more like a dream. This may seem odd t' ye, Silas, when I tell ye Marthy rid behind me on a horse ten miles to hear some feller make a big speech fer Andy

Jackson. Then's when we had our first courtship, Silas, an' I kin remember t' this very day, tho' it's been more'n fifty years, jest how she looked that day as we rode through them big woods. I'd jest like t' feel agin, Silas, jest as I did that fine summer day when I felt Marthy's pretty arm clingin' t' me, an' felt her warm breath on my neck. We didn't care much whether we ever got t' the meetin', but in time we did arrive. Ye see in them days the country wuz new, an' there wus skurcely any place fer people t' go fer pleasure, so these speakin's alus brung out the people. Well, sir, Silas, ye mought not believe it now, but Marthy wuz much like the gals air now-a-days. The meetin' wuz held in the woods an' everybody brung their dinners. I mind how her bright eyes danced with delight at the lively scenes at the meetin', an' her pretty face wuz all aglow. Then there wuz Jim Hensley an' Jim Cox, an' two or three more fellers who wanted t' talk t' Marthy all the time. An', Si, atween you an' me, I think Marthy wanted t' make shore I loved her by scein' ef I'd be jealous. So she took a drink uv cider with Jim Hensley, an' Jim Cox he swung her in a big grape-vine swing he fixed up. We didn't listen much t' the speaker. I mind hearin' him say somethin' 'bout the National Bank bein' a menace t' the country, an' ever' now an' then he'd wind up a sentence by sayin', '*Old Hickory* would shorely be elected

president!' Ye see, Silas, I wuz busy watchin' Cox an' Hensley an' keepin' atween them an' Marthy much ez I could 'thout showin' it. An' t' think now that them pore fellers died afore ye wus born, Silas, an' out in the woods where Cox wuz buried, there's a big poplar tree growin' over his grave. Well, as I said, I wus too absorbed in Marthy t' think much about who wuz t' be president, so by an' by I managed t' git Marthy away 'long after dinner sometime, an' we loitered along the way home under the big shady trees. Fer a long way I jest pouted, kinder wantin' t' be made over a leetle, ye know. By an' by Marthy, she says t' me, 'Henry Boggs, what's the matter with ye, anyway? Air ye poutin' about Jim Hensley?' "

"'No,' says I, sad like."

"Jim Cox?"

"'No,' says I, sadder'n ever."

"Well then," says she, "what is the matter?"

"Ye see, Silas, I didn't jest like t' own up that I wus jealous uv them fellers, so I jest says, 'I don't think ye love me, Marthy. Ye like them fellers better'n ye do me,' an' we rode on in silence, an' she not sayin' a word t' me. It finally come t' me that I had offended her by doubtin' her love fer me, yet there'd been nothin' said atween us, an' I felt so mean an' sorry that I jest dropped the bridle rein down on Dollie's neck an' jest put my own big warm hand up over her little

plump hand as it lay around my waist an' squeezed it affectionate like. Then I felt her face up aginst my shoulders, an' I knowed she wus cryin'. I turned in the saddle, an' tried t' git her face around so I could see it, but she kept it hid fer a long time, 'bout as near the middle uv my back as she could git it, till we come t' a spring, an' I says, 'we stop here, Marthy, an' git a drink.' Now there wus a stump jest right fer her t' git off on, but ye know, Si, I had designs in my mind jest like many another young feller has had, so I jest tossed my right leg over Dollie's neck an' dropped t' the ground, an' I says 'come, Marthy dear, an' we'll rest an' drink by the wayside.' An' do ye' know, Silas, as I helped her down, seein' her eyes red from cryin', I jest caught her up in my big arms, an' she afterwards told me I come moughty nigh smotherin' her, kissin' her so much. Then we set by that spring among the May apples an' wild flowers in that wood fer a long time, smilin' an' a-laughin' an' a-kissin' each other. It wus a grand day, Silas. I recollect now, too, after we got seated an' Marthy's head lay on my shoulder, a doe an' her fawn come t' the spring t' git water, but seein' us they scampered off agin. An' t' think that even them great woods air dead an' gone, an' that spring has been neglected an' lost in the earth, an' only Marthy

an' me left uv all that we saw an' know'd in that springtime uv our lives."

He sat for quite a time smiling sadly over it, totally lost to his surroundings. At last he started up in a hurry, happening to think of Ed Smith in the outer office waiting for them.

"Sufferin' Moses! Silas, t' think ye'd let me set here an' waste yer time this way, when Mr. Smith 's waitin'. Shame on ye, boy!"

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Boggs. You needn't worry about that. I have enjoyed your story so well I wouldn't have had it interrupted for a great deal."

Well, ye see, Silas, it wuz all 'cause I was thinkin' bout this dinner we air t' hev, an' how like Marthy an' me ye—, well, ye're comin' out, Si, son, when Julie comes? Ye can bring her out with Blaze-face, an' we will jest kill the fatted calf, I kin tell ye."

"I'll come, sure, Mr. Boggs, and will bring Miss Howe with me."

The old man didn't say a word then, but as they walked to the door he put his arm affectionately around Silas and said: "Thank ye, son."

When the old man was gone, Silas and Ed sat looking at him from the window as he crossed the street below. In spite of his great age he looked like a perfect man.

"He must have been a handsome fellow when

he was young," mused Smith, as he watched him.

"Undoubtedly," replied Cobb. "He has just been telling me a love story, and no one can tell a better one, either. He looks upon me as his son, and has just invited me to a dinner at his house in June—myself and a young lady. There is just to be the four of us present, and the dear old things are going to 'make believe' that the young lady and I are their children. Well, this idea made him reminiscent, and he told me his own love story, and I tell you it was just as full of life and tender interest as anybody's."

"Who is the young lady?" asked Smith.

"Miss Howe."

Smith gave him a searching glance and asked: "Who's she?"

"One of my teachers," he answered, looking very innocent.

"Of course, but which one? What are you blushing about, man?"

Silas wasn't blushing at all, but no sooner was he charged with it than he did blush.

"Well, I'll give you her history if you like. Let me see, she was born of good parentage, June——"

"That's enough. Just wanted to know the month. It's all clear to me. That's a fatal month to be born in. It's a sad case, Silas. No hope for you now. I have looked forward to many days of

your society, but you see fit to transfer your affections to a female this early in the game, which shows you to be a fickle man."

"Oh, it's not so bad as that. We are only friends."

"Brother and sister," suggested Smith.

Just here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of "Misther" Mulvany, living in the district where Oliver Scotland taught school, and Silas' late scene of war.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Mulvany?"

"Good-afthurnoon to yersilf, Misther Cobb, and how is yer health this foine day?"

"Very good, indeed, Mr. Mulvany. Let me introduce you to Superintendent Smith, of Brownville. Mr. Mulvany, Mr. Smith."

"Oh, and it's Misther Smith, is it? Yis, I know of ye, sor."

"Nothing bad, I hope, Mr. Mulvany."

"No, indade; ye air loike Misther Cobb."

"How like him, Mr. Mulvany?"

"Well, ye're both good foighters. And, Silas, they do tell me ye have declared war on Jarmany?"

"Why, how is that?"

"The dommed Dutch of our deestrict say ye air makin' war on 'em, by firin' that dirty spalpeen, Scotland, an' I come in to offer ye the sarvice of the royal order of the Mulvanys. The Irish air wid ye, Misther Cobb, to the bloody ind."

"I hope there won't be any blood-letting, Mr. Mulvany," replied Silas laughing.

"The Irish are the greatest people on earth," interrupted Smith, "to fight for their friends."

"Right ye air, Misther Smith. The Irish has been consistent inimies of the Dutch of our deestrict for comin' twinty years now, because the dirty spalpeens discharged Katie Burke because she made the byes wash their faces in the creek ivery marnin'. Yis, sor, the war has been a long and bloody wan. Oh, ye'll have a toime with thim Dutch, Misther Cobb, and I prophesoy a war of at least twinty years' dooration."

"My goodness! Mr. Mulvany, you don't mean the German people of your district are so wrought up over the Scotland matter as that? I cannot understand how anyone can consistently defend the action of Mr. Scotland."

"It's consistency, is it, ye're afthur findin' in the Dutch? Ye're wrong, Silas. It's inimies ye'll find, good and str-rong. Scotland was wan of thim—dirt and all—and ye mark me worruds, me bye, it'll take twinty years of hard foightin' to subdoo thim Dutch, onless ye have the Irish at yer back, which ye will, of coorse."

It now became necessary to explain the whole situation—how Silas found Scotland's school, and his method of dismissal, etc. Superintendent Smith was greatly interested, and after Mulvany

nad gone, he and Silas went over the whole ground together. Smith was of the opinion that he had acted exactly right, whereas Silas held that he had not been diplomatic enough. 'He had been too plain in his speech, while he could have attained the same results by having no unpleasant words with Scotland. Still, he did not intend to discharge him to begin with, but only came to that decision after he had shown his ugly disposition.

After all their arguments, they agreed in the end that every case demands special action, and the action can never be forecasted. Taking everything into account, Scotland's utter incapacity, his vulger personality, and general character, and all the circumstances of Silas' conversation with him, his idea of helping him, etc., it is hard to say whether, after all, he did not act exactly right, or at least logically on the subject.

XL.

In the meantime Josephine Alger was getting the upper hand of the people in the Dutch settlement, and Oliver Scotland's influence was gradually losing force. Contrary to Mr. Mulvany's prophecy of a "twinty-year war," the patrons of the school began to see and gradually understand the difference between Miss Alger and Mr. Scotland. The pupils became enthusiastic in their work, and the influence was so marked that the parents at home began to feel it. In time, as each one felt the justice of Superintendent Cobb's action, they gradually began to discuss it among themselves, and in the end nearly all of them became enthusiastic supporters of the county superintendent under all circumstances.

The work of gradation and classification in the county was carried forward by the teachers in a faithful and successful manner, and watched by the superintendent with as much care as a mother watches the growth of her new-born babe.

Silas felt the importance of the work sufficiently to warrant his going carefully into the details of the course of study each month, to outline the work for the teachers, and to show them how to do it all, yet keep the number of classes down to the minimum.

In the spring he asked each teacher to report to him the number of pupils in his school that would be able to finish the course up to and including the eighth year.

After that he arranged his examinations for each school or township according to conditions and circumstances, and appointed two or three teachers to conduct the examination in each township or locality. It resulted in forty or fifty pupils passing the desired grade.

Graduation exercises were then arranged for in each township, and in some instances in two or three places in a single township. It was arranged so no two of the exercises were held on the same night, thus enabling Silas to attend them all and award the diplomas to the pupils. Great interest was aroused among the people. The first exercises of the series were held at a country church, where three schools having ten graduates among them met together. It was a great night, and all the people able to go were present. Some three hundred persons crowded into the little church, eager and enthusiastic. It was in Muddy Creek township, and the schools represented consisted of District No. 8, Silas' old school; District No. 6, Josephine Alger's old school, and District No. 4, Miss Winterset's school. It will be remembered by the reader that Miss Winterset was the

teacher Silas had the scene with while visiting her school a few weeks previous.

Great preparation had been made for the occasion, and a formal program was prepared. Each graduate was to speak a piece or read an essay, and several of the leading patrons were on the program for short talks. Miss Josephine Alger had come back from "Dutchland" for this special occasion to help carry out the program, and it had been arranged mainly by her. As Silas glanced over the program and noted that it called for speeches by Henry Boggs, Caleb Fisher, Silas Cobb and Sam Street, he knew well enough that Josephine Alger's common sense did that part of it at least. It was a great scheme to get the leading men of the district interested. Silas noted, too, that his name was on the program for awarding the diplomas as well as for making a speech.

Miss Alger was mistress of the ceremony, and she was in her place at the proper time to begin. The graduates were properly bedecked in ribbons and bouquets and seated on the rostrum. Old Henry Boggs was the only man on the rostrum, and he sat there, puffed up with pride, by the side of Miss Alger. He seemed so happy, good-natured, and true, that it did the people good to look at him. When Miss Alger had led him up from the audience and seated him by her, the audience

burst out with applause. Most everybody loved Henry Boggs, and always showed it on the least provocation.

Caleb Fisher, from District No. 4, Miss Winterset's school, had put on his best clothes, and, as a result, was suffering horribly. He sat with Sam Street and Mr. Willoby, from No. 6, on the front row of seats under the pulpit.

It was a great night for Muddy Creek township. Everybody had on their good clothes, and the idea of having graduates in the township filled the people with pride. Then, too, Superintendent Cobb was to be there and make them a speech; that alone would bring out the people.

Finally, after an appropriate introduction by Miss Alger, and amid much anxiety on the part of the teachers, the oratory of the graduating class was launched. Miss Winterset and Miss Phillips sat demurely back of Henry Boggs, and were completely hidden by that worthy gentleman. The audience listened with much interest to the pupils, and all the little boys and girls envied them with all their hearts, and longed for the day when they, too, would be so honored.

Then, when the class had finished, Silas awarded them their diplomas, at the same time making clear to them the object of the work, and how this was only their first step toward a higher education. The high school, or some other school of

higher learning, should be entered at once. If that were not possible, then continue in their home school, taking up the ninth year of the course of study.

Old Henry Boggs' turn came next.

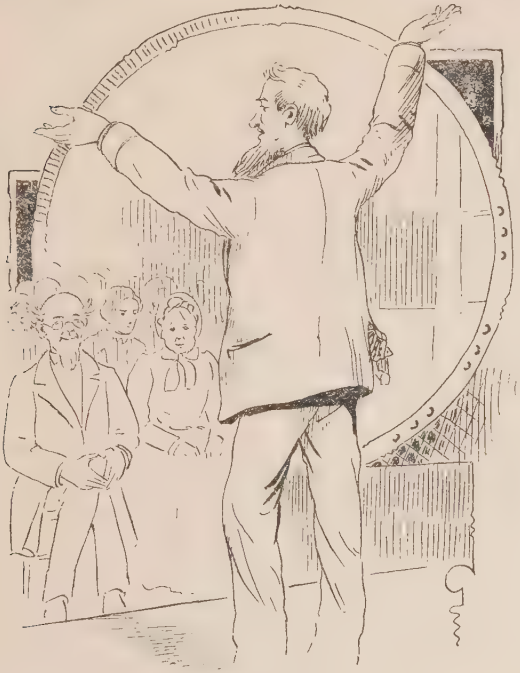
Miss Alger introduced him as the oldest and most honored citizen of the township, which did much in stimulating him to do his position credit. Silas was near him, and could see that the old gentleman was considerably wrought up over his responsibility. Silas leaned over and whispered: "I am looking for you to beat that speech you made for me before the county committee, Uncle Henry."

Everybody was hurrahing for Mr. Boggs, so he was too excited to answer Silas, but he rose up amid the little people around him, and as he rose, both his big long arms went out in a mighty gesture, as he declared: "Feller citizens an' friends: This is the biggest thing we ever had in Muddy Crick township." (The audience went wild with applause.) "I've been livin' in these here parts more'n fifty years, an' I never seed anything like it afore. (More applause, and Mr. Boggs was warming up to his subject.) Why is it we ain't never had sich doin's afore, feller citizens?"

"Because we never had a superintendent, Henry," answered a man from the audience.

"That's it 'zactly, sir. It's because we ain't

never had a man at the head uv our schools who wus gifted with the power an' sense t' do it. (More applause.) An' I'll tell ye another thing,



"Feller citizens an' friends:"

feller citizens, that we will all agree on, an' that is none uv this would have been possible 'thout these dear, patient girls here, who teached these

schools. (This brought a vigorous applause.) When I look int' the faces uv ye all, I don't forgit that I wus a young man afore the oldest man present wus born. Sam Street here, my neighbor, was born the year I cast my first vote fer Andy Jackson, an' in them days we didn't have no schools. In the hull of Brush county there wus not a single schoolhouse, an' it was several years afore we got any. An' friends, ye no doubt will laugh when I tell ye I teached the first school in this county, an' in them days I wus considered better edicated than most men. I could read an' write an' spell some, an' that wus more'n most men could do. So I want t' show ye my intrust in edication by bein' present t'-night an' encouragin' these little boys an' girls t' git a good schoolin'. As ye all know, havin' no children uv my own, I feel I ort t' help edicate other people's t' make up fer it. So we want t' do all we kin t' help the teachers, pay our taxes, visit the schools, an' give a helpin' hand t' each other. I specially want t' tell these gradeates that what Superintendent Cobb says t' them is true, that they should not neglect t' go on t' school. When I see a hard workin', faithful boy or girl strugglin' fer learnin', I alus feel like helpin' 'em along, an' I tell ye, boys an' girls, ef you ever need a friend an' an ole man like me is fit fer anything, ye jest come t' me.

"I thank ye all, friends, fer yer kind attention." (Great applause.)

Caleb Fisher, the supposed philosopher, the silent one, sat in a deep study after Henry Boggs sat down. He did not even hear Miss Alger announce that "Mr. Caleb Fisher, director of District No. 4, would now address the people." Sam Street gouged his elbow into Caleb's ribs, calling him to earth again, but not with a start. No one ever made Caleb start—at least in a hurry. As soon as it dawned on him that he had been called on for his speech, he deliberately dropped his cud of tobacco into his hand and transferred it into his outside coat pocket. He had often done this before in a pinch. There were no less than forty people between Caleb and the window, all of which he had observed long before, anticipating this dilemma.

"Feller citizens: As director uv Deestrict No. 4, I announce that I am middlin' well pleased with this meetin'. I am middlin' well pleased with the children's speeches, an' am middlin' well pleased with Henry Boggs' speech. I am glad Muddy Crick has at last waked up t' its duty t' the schools. Thank ye fer yer attention." (Great applause).

Sam Street simply excused himself, saying he could not make a speech, but everybody knew his heart was in the work of the schools. Others

from the audience spoke after frequent urgings from Henry Boggs who, in his enthusiasm, almost assumed control of the meeting. He and Miss Alger afforded as great a contrast in appearance, as one could well imagine as they sat there side by side. Never before had there been such interest aroused as on this night. Silas took occasion to tell them about needed repairs on schoolhouses and outbuildings, all of which proved very effective.

The end of the program came at last, and then followed a general hand-shaking and exchange of good wishes all around. Everybody felt so good toward everybody that even Caleb Fisher and Mr. Willoby, sworn enemies, were seen greeting each other. Silas almost forgot the little scene he had had with Miss Winterset only a few weeks before, in his warm greeting of the teachers.

After exchanging compliments all around, the party began to make ready to start to their respective homes. In the general confusion of hand-shaking at parting Miss Winterset managed to get near Silas again, and in bidding him good-night she held to his hand long enough to say:

"I am awfully sorry, Mr. Cobb, for my rude manner that day; can you forgive me? I am trying so hard to do as you told me."

She was flushed and eager to catch his answer amid the noise and confusion, and he leaned over

so she could hear him, and looking straight into her eyes, as if looking for the truth of her words, he instantly answered:

"It seems to be all right, Miss Winterset, and I heartily forgive you. Come and see me when you can and we will talk over the future." He gave her hand a good hearty grasp and was gone.

There is always something about a reconciliation like this that lingers with us a long time. It may be questioned by some, but it would seem that two equally noble souls, one wrapped in a homely physique, and the other in a handsome one, will exert quite a different influence on a woman, in case the two noble souls happen to be men. There was no denying the fact that Silas Cobb was a fine-looking man, and it is a question whether or not this fact did not unconsciously greatly influence Miss Winterset. Had Silas Cobb been a homely man, would Miss Winterset have forgotten his severe words? It is quite probable she would not, though she was conscious that she was wrong. At any rate, Miss Winterset was still trembling from excitement after she had gotten home two hours later, as a result of having been forgiven for her ill-advised words.

Silas found Mr. Boggs and Miss Alger waiting for him.

"Silas, ye got t' go home with me fer the night. Miss Alger is goin' an' I'm jest debatin' whether

I ort t' take her in my buggy or let ye take her. Course the gal 'd rather go with me, but seein' ye mought feel a little jealous uv the old man, I'll let Josephine ride with ye!"

"Now I'll tell you, Mr. Boggs, it isn't the first time you have tried to take girls away from me by showing yourself generous enough to give them up to me. Don't you let him work any of his designs on you, Miss Alger. He fully expects that in the end you will ride with him, and I'll show him you shan't," and straightway he took Miss Alger by the arm, and laughing, called back: "Come on, Uncle Henry; you ride alone *this* night."

Everybody laughed, and Mr. Boggs, happy as could be to see others happy, made his way through the crowd, talking and laughing with the young people around him. Outside there were all sorts of vehicles, from two-wheeled carts to heavy farm wagons. The large wagons were drawn up in front of the door, and women and children would pile into them, sometimes as many as a dozen to a wagon. Sounds came from all parts of the yard of the men unhitching teams and saddle horses, everybody talking, and quite a little outpouring of youthful vigor in the way of yells and songs. Now and then among the vehicles would come a man on horseback, and riding up to a block near by, his wife, or a daughter, or

probably a sweetheart, would mount behind him, and off they would ride into the darkness, calling good-bye to those left behind. In fact, there were quite a number "riding double," as the roads were muddy, and it took less work for both man and beast.

Silas and Josephine were seated in Silas' buggy behind Blaze-face, waiting for Mr. Boggs to get through visiting with Sam Street, so he could lead the way for them. It was a foggy night and the roads were muddy, a typical condition of southern Illinois in March. Old Henry Boggs was a furious driver when the spell was on, and it was usually on when pace-making for some one. He had no sooner started than the idea occurred to him of showing Silas a specimen of his driving, and giving Dollie Boggs the reins, he went down the road at a very swift gait, calling back to Silas and Miss Alger, "I'll wait fer ye t' ketch up ever' now an' then."

But he didn't have to wait, for Blaze-face fairly tore the mud from the earth with his powerful strides, and sent it against the dashboard with a rattle. The wheels would gather up great gobs of it and throw it forward as if trying to strike Mr. Boggs. No man could hold such a horse to a reasonable gait when his mate, Dollie Boggs, was in front setting the pace at a very unreasonable gait. She and Blaze-face had grown up

together in Mr. Boggs' great pasture, and had spent the evening talking about old times over the hitching rack. So Blaze-face felt it his duty to keep up with her, Silas Cobb notwithstanding.

Silas pulled on the lines vigorously, and enjoyed the sensation of fast driving, but the horse did not pay the least attention to his pulling. Miss Alger was not used to horses, especially fast horses, so she became frightened. When Silas saw that she was afraid, he made an earnest effort to control the horse's speed, but he could not lessen it. He did not call to Mr. Boggs to lessen his gait, because the noise was so great he could not have been heard. He laughed in a confident manner and tried to console Josephine by telling her that that was just Blaze-face's way. He wouldn't harm a chicken, and was now only anxious to catch up with his sweetheart, Dollie Boggs. By this time they had reached a long level stretch of road, and Silas faintly made out amid the noise a jovial whoop from Mr. Boggs, and Dollie seemed to almost fly along the lane. The mud was thin and shallow here, so it did not greatly impede their movement, and the buggies both having tops and side curtains, the occupants were sheltered from the mud.

When Silas and Miss Alger reached the entrance to the lane, Blaze-face took the bit between his teeth and redoubled his efforts. Silas

could not hold him, and became uneasy for fear of a rut and consequent break-down. Miss Alger, in her fright, grabbed the lines, and they both hung on to Blaze-face for dear life. At last, after an age, it seemed, they came to a hill, and old Henry Boggs could be dimly made out in the darkness. He and Dollie seemed to have had quite enough, and Blaze-face came to a slow trot as though nothing had happened, perfectly satisfied now that he was rubbing his nose against Mr. Boggs' back, which he could feel through the curtain. Silas felt something move in his hands, and realized that he had Miss Alger's poor little hands all crushed up on the lines.

"Why, you poor girl! Why didn't you tell me I was crushing your hands." He held the lines over his arm and took her hands and rubbed them gently to restore circulation, and as he did so, asked if they hurt her much. She began to say something, but fell back against the cushions in a dead faint. Just at this moment the hill was passed, and away the horses went again.

Now Silas was in a pitiable condition. The horse was given the rein and Silas talked to Josephine, shook her, rubbed her face and hands, tried to call to Mr. Boggs, and condemned himself shamefully for his part in bringing her out on such a night, after so much excitement, and frightening her to death. Would she never revive? The horse went

faster. Would there never be another hill? He put his arm around her to hold her from falling out, and tried to make her position one of comfort, still rubbing her hands with his free one. Finally he remembered that her collar might be tight, so he unfastened it, and after a few moments she began to recover consciousness. As she did so she recalled the circumstances, and knew they were still riding furiously, and the first thing she said was: "Oh, we shall be killed!"

"Oh, no, we won't, Josephine. Don't think of such a thing. We are just trotting along nicely. Can't you trust me? Can't you understand that I will take care of you? Listen, now," he said, with a determination to make her believe. "Do you hear me?" and he drew her up tight to him and tried to shut out the noise from the moving avalanche of horse and buggy, with his hand spread out against her face and ear. "Don't you know I have you safe here, and there is no danger? Oh! I am a brute to bring you out here and frighten you this way. Are you hurt? Are you killed? Can you forgive me, and Mr. Boggs, for such foolishness? Oh, this is awful!" And Miss Alger lay there in his arms and heard his ravings and self-condemnation.

The only thing he could see in the darkness was a pale face, with closed eyes, and he felt her limp body lying helpless in his arms.

As he chafed her hands and talked to her as he would speak to a child to sooth it, he felt her move slightly, and saw her eyes open. "Do you feel better now, Miss Alger?" She nodded her head affirmatively without speaking, and lay still, apparently contented where she was.

Perhaps it was the great strength of the magnetic force passing from Silas to her that quieted her fear and renewed her faith, and perhaps she felt happy and thrilled, feeling that strong arm around her without being conscious of the cause of it. Perhaps, too, he felt that lithe form in his arms and that head against his shoulder. Perhaps the contact of these two bodies produced a new force. Such things are common enough in nature, and that new force led to greater sympathy. He looked again at her white face and her eyes opened wide and looked up into his. Their faces were close together and their breaths intermingled. His heart overflowed with pity for her and reproach for himself. Again, his thoughts flashed out the history of her life of self-sacrifice and sublimity of soul. He felt the purest sympathy for the poor frail thing lying there confidently in his arms, and his heart went out to her with tenderness and brotherly affection.

"Are you afraid now, Josephine?" he asked again, gently, looking down into her face.

"No," she said, faintly, "I am not afraid now."

This expressed confidence in him at last, and the great relief and happiness he felt at seeing her recover from the swoon led him, on the impulse of the moment, to lean over her upturned face and kiss her lips. This kiss seemed to her to seal their troth, and the love that had slumbered in her heart, restrained for so long, now burst forth in all its fullness, and she put her arm up around his neck and drew his face down to hers in a long, lingering kiss, and when Silas looked into her eyes again they sparkled as if her soul was on fire.

"Oh, Josephine! Josephine!" he cried in a broken voice, "what have I done? What has befallen us?" In a nervous and excited manner, not knowing why or what he was about, and only attracted by the strong, pure love the girl bore him, he was holding her close to his heart, when he was startled by old Henry Boggs' voice.

"Whoa! Whoa, Dollie!"

They had arrived at Mr. Boggs' barn-yard gate, and Mr. Boggs was calling them back to earth.

"Well, here we air, children. Drive right in while I hold the gate open. Bless my life, Silas, but Dollie's a flyer, ain't she? Jest thought I'd see ef she could keep old Blaze-face a-goin' an' blame me ef she didn't! Sufferin' Moses! but the boy'll have a time gittin' 'em cleaned up, won't he?"

"I should think he would," replied Silas, "and

you have just about frightened Miss Alger to death, which will take you a long time to make right, too."

Mr. Boggs laughed till the echo bounded back from the hill to the barn two or three times. Silas let the old man believe he was joking, for Miss Alger touched his arm and said, very softly, "Don't trouble him about it, Silas."

Silas drove in and up to the yard gate leading to the house, where he got out and literally lifted Miss Alger out in his big, strong arms and set her on the stile-block.

"Oh, you are so awfully strong, Silas. You must have all my strength now, for I fear I can't walk to the house." She got up to go, and would have fallen had he not caught her again.

"Oh, I have been a perfect beast with you, Josephine."

"Oh, no, no, you haven't Silas. I am only weak and trembling, but I feel ever so happy—so happy I cannot express it all—never in all the world can I tell it all if I talked—talked always—don't you know—don't you understand?" and as she stood on the step a foot above the ground, her head was on a level with his. She leaned over against his breast and put her pale, sweet face up to his as the tears of joy rolled down her cheeks.

"You poor, nerve-broken girl! I am so sorry—"

"Is it you Josephine?" called Mrs. Boggs from the front porch. "Come right in."

"Yes, Aunty, it is I—am coming right away. We have just arrived," and with an affectionate squeeze of his hand, she left Silas and went slowly up the path to Mrs. Boggs. He stood watching her, and saw Mrs. Boggs take her in her arms and kiss her, and saw Josephine return the caress very affectionately.

Now, as he fumbled with muddy tugs and harness while unhitching, his blood began to cool and Reason came stalking in and was enthroned again. What had possessed him? What had he done? Reason began to question him thus: Don't you understand what has happened to her, and all because you took advantage of the nerve-torn girl while she was recovering from a swoon? Don't you understand now that you have over-powered her by main strength of *life* and *mind* and robbed her of her heart? Not deliberately, but in a wild impulse of the moment, while Anarchy reigned instead of me, *Reason?* And don't you understand that *she* thinks you love her, and considers your act to-night as that of a plighted troth? And don't you know that your heart is already somewhere else? How are you to excuse the wrong you have done yourself this night and the ruin you will bring to two hearts of the three, the very best you can do? Oh, you

great wild, mad, crazy idiot! Why were you ever born? All your life till now you have been noble with women, and I have always ruled you, but to-night I am dethroned and a *firebrand* is given the crown, while you go wild and follow impulse into a dangerous mire. Fool! fool! You ought to be scourged from the earth!"

So Silas' *reason* went on lashing him into a fury. He had never before been utterly torn with remorse for his own acts; never before had he lost all control of himself. He would explain it all to Josephine and tell her into what utter degradation he had fallen, and that he did not mean it in the sense she had understood him. He must do it at once. He never could live the night through in such a false light. So when he and Mr. Boggs got through stabling the horses, they went up to the house and found Mrs. Boggs and Miss Alger basking in front of a big fire-place full of blazing logs. It was a comfortable scene on such a chilly night. Silas' hands had gotten quite cold unhitching, and rather muddy, too, so he passed through into the kitchen, being perfectly at home, and washed his hands. Miss Alger was looking flushed and happy, and smiled up into his face so tenderly, his heart again became torn between sympathy and *duty*. How could he ever tell her if she always looked like that. He sat down by the fire next to her. She looked at his hands and

saw they were blue with cold. She reached over and laid her warm hand on his and said: "Silas, your hands are *so* cold," and she did not hesitate to caress them, though Mr. Boggs was sputtering around, talking and fussing with his gloves and overcoat, trying to get settled. Mrs. Boggs went out to get some apples. Josephine sat looking at Silas, smiling, with the consciousness of a great love. It softened Silas' harshness toward himself, and he gradually became calmed as he sat there enjoying everything—apples, fire, Josephine, Mr. Boggs, Mrs. Boggs, the old home—absolutely everything, and only now and then a pang would shoot through his heart as he recalled his position.

It was time to retire. Mr. Boggs went out for fuel for the morning fire. Mrs. Boggs went for a lamp and led the way for Miss Alger to her room. "Good night, Silas," she said, and she came up to him as Mrs. Boggs went on, and took his hand in hers. Her face was turned up to his almost pleading for something, yet too shy to take it, but he pretended not to see it. "Good night, Josephine, and I do hope you will be none the worse for *this* night. I am so sorry—"

"Oh why do you say it, Silas, when I am so happy," and, her face radiant with love, she patted his hand and again said "Good night, Silas, and pleasant dreams to you," and slowly followed Mrs. Boggs to her room.

He sat down by the fire and again Reason began to scourge him. He gazed into the embers for hours—long after every one was in bed and asleep, and lived it all over again. His mind went back to the garden in Terre Haute, and went over his little visit with Julia Howe. Did they not understand each other, though no words had been spoken, and did she not love him? Yet to-night he had forgotten her completely and had bound himself for life to another, unless his honor was of such a flimsy character that it would permit him to break her heart instead. He went up to his room, blew out the light, and went to bed. He couldn't sleep, so he got up and sat at the window wrapped in a quilt, resting his head in his hands. The wind came up and blew away the clouds, and the moon shone out dimly over the hills. The bare poplars waved their naked arms frantically and moaned as if heart-broken. He sat there all the night through, lost sometimes in the thought that these turbulent, wind-swept trees were human beings, burdened with great sorrows like his own.

Josephine Alger's frail body was not equal to the continuous strain of teaching. She had been so completely wrapped up in her work that the approaching break in her health came on without warning. The added strain which the Dutch school brought, and the extra work of arranging

the program for the graduating exercises, had probably only quickened the approach of a nervous collapse by a few days or weeks.

On the morning following Miss Alger was not able to leave her bed. Mrs. Boggs reported her condition to Silas and Mr. Boggs, and a doctor was sent for at once. In the meantime Silas drove to his office and waited nervously for the doctor's return, so he might ascertain her true condition. When he did return it was to be informed that Miss Alger had been stricken with a fatal malady, due to a weakened condition of her system, brought on by over-exertion.

Silas hastened to her at once, not knowing or reasoning why he went. Mrs. Boggs was faithfully nursing the sick girl, and her face lighted up with relief when she saw Silas had returned. With tears in her eyes she quietly drew him into the room and led him to the bedside. The afternoon sun, low in the southwest, was shining with a softened glow over a wintry aspect, and through the window on Josephine's bed. Her flushed face told the fatal story without the need of words. She opened her eyes, and there was only a momentary recognition and clasp of the hand to tell Silas that she was for the instant conscious of his presence.

"Don't you know me, Josephine?" he asked, and as he held her hand in one of his, he laid

the other on her forehead, now parched with fever, and her lips moved, but no sound could be heard. From under her closed eyelids the tears rolled out and coursed down her cheeks, telling more plainly than words that she understood that her light was burning very low, and that just as life had bloomed to its brightest and best the penalty which old earth exacts from us all was demanded of her. What anguish of heart she suffered no one knew, because she lapsed into unconsciousness while Silas held her hand, and the struggle of life against death was purely one of an involuntary nature.

But it is not the author's purpose to describe a deathbed scene, except so far as the event affects the life and acts of our chief character. It is now sufficient to relate the simple fact that Josephine Alger died within a week from the time of taking to her bed, and during that time there was not a moment when she could have heard the story Silas had originally intended to tell her; and be it said to his credit, he had decided instantly on hearing of her hopeless condition that she should not know it. Why should not her conscious moments be filled with a realization of the love that is due every heart in the world, if, in doing so, one added moment's pleasure is gained without a compensating evil? In this case death was to pay the debt in full, regardless of all else, and

from whatever cause. So, in her conscious moments, she felt his presence in the room, and it was in this manner that Josephine Alger passed quietly out of the world, and left it better for having lived in it.

It is as great a boon as any of us can hope for, if in the end when the lamp of life is burning low, and the oil has been consumed to the last dregs, the ledger will show the sum total of the good to outweigh the evil.

So Josephine Alger slipped out of the world bearing the secret of her love with her, and left none behind to tell of it, save Silas Cobb, and he never told of it. But as the months went by and nothing but the memory of her remained, he bedecked it with beautiful flowers, put it in a frame of the most exquisite design, and hung it away in his heart—in the most sacredly kept corner; and often on dull, dark days when alone he would draw aside the curtain and look at it regretfully, and from out its mysterious folds would come the breath of the past, and again that faint, musical voice that wandered only in the tangled paths of his mind, would repeat those burning words, "Oh, I am so happy, Silas. If I could live forever and talk—talk always, I never could tell it all to you."

XLI.

One morning in May Silas sat at his desk very busily engaged in writing. There lay before him a stack of letters to answer and a vast amount of other detail to be cared for. He had just returned from a long, tiresome trip over the hills of the county, visiting schools, and it was rather annoying to him to think that he must now sit down and spend his valuable time writing simple answers to letters, and doing much work that a child could do equally as well as he could. While thus engaged Mr. James Fox, chairman of the board of supervisors for Brush county, came in.

"Good-morning, Silas."

"Good-morning, Mr. Fox, glad to see you. Come in."

"Where have you been all spring, man? I have wasted $20 worth of time coming in here to see you. This makes four trips I have made to this office. It's a wonder you wouldn't stay and attend to business, my boy; eh?"

"Nothing pleases me so well, Mr. Fox, as to know I have now a practical illustration of the niggardly manner in which this office is treated. In the first place you have lost $20 at your own figure, coming in here to see me. I am sure there have been at least fifty other men in here on the

same errand, all of them no doubt losing valuable time. But that is their fault, for Saturdays are my office days, and I am not supposed to be here during the week. Yet if I had a clerk in this office, forty of the fifty men who have called could have been attended to by the clerk, and the other ten could have called on Saturday to see me."

"Then again, you see me sitting here answering letters. I'll read you a sample: 'Please advise me when next teachers' meeting is to be held.' Here's another: 'What kind of song book would you recommend me to use, etc.;' and still another: 'Send me a set of blanks for this district.' Now here I sit practically wasting my time, doing something that a cheap clerk could do, when I ought to be giving my attention to the general work of supervision. Aside from the work, this office should be open every day in the week. The people have a right to demand that it should be kept open. Every important office in the county has from one to three clerks except this one. I consider that the proper control and supervision of the schools of Brush county require the services of one good clerk, and I now formally make a request through you to the board for an order to employ one at a salary, say, of $35 a month."

Mr. Fox smiled, and said: "Littleman has been

trying to get us to do that for ten years, and we never could see any need of it, but I don't know but we were wrong. Can you get a good clerk for $35.00 a month? Hadn't you better tackle us for $50.00 and give us a chance to split the difference with you, eh, Silas?"

"That might be a good plan, Mr. Fox. So I raise my demand to $50.00; now when shall I get it?"

"Well, judging from Littleman's experience—"

"But you are not to do that, Mr. Fox. You are to judge from the necessity of the case. Now I tell you what I'll do: I will go right down with you now and I will tell the board in person what I want, and I will tell them why I want it so plainly there won't be any doubt about it. You gentlemen are all business men of sense, and I am not wanting anything a business man of sense can't see I need, and if there is no obstacle outside of their control, in the way, I'll get what I ask for."

Mr. Fox laughed again, and said: "Silas, you know not of what you speak. Littleman has talked to that board till it's got to be a joke, and they'll laugh when you spring the subject on them; mark my words."

"All right, Mr. Fox, let them laugh; but I'll tell you right now this office shall not be made the laughing stock by anybody while I hold it, if I

can prevent it, and I say to you right now that that board won't laugh when I am through talking to them, and if they are the men they seem to me to be, they will act along the lines I recommend. Everything depends, Mr. Fox, on the faith and sincerity of the person making the request, provided, of course, he has any reason for making it."

"Well, so far as I am concerned, Silas, I think you ought to have a clerk, and I'll vote that way, but this board is a stickler for economy, and I doubt your meeting with success."

They went down to the board room, and Mr. Fox told the board the county superintendent had a statement to make to them.

Silas began by recounting the nature of his correspondence, and the amount of printed matter that ought to be mailed each month. He showed how much of his time he was taking for that class of work, and how much it was costing to do it. He then showed them how annoying and inconvenient it was for the office to be closed all week, when the people wanted to transact business with it. By this time there seemed to be no inclination to smile, and when he launched into comparison, showing the clerk hire of other offices and the work to be done in them as compared with his, giving facts and figures, the board settled down to an honest consideration of

the subject. It was not so much the facts that moved the board as it was the firm conviction that they were not being trifled with; that Silas Cobb was eminently a man of acts, sincere and conscientious. They were overwhelmed with his push and enthusiasm, backed up with a positive knowledge of what was needed, and the courage to make a gentlemanly and vigorous demand for it. None of Littleman's simpering, smirking and apologetic manner belonged to him. He looked upon the subject as a duty the board owed the people and not as a favor to him. When he sat down old Henry Boggs, who was a member of the board, got up and made a motion to the effect that the office should have a clerk, and the salary was not to exceed $50 a month. Henry Boggs was also a man of strong convictions, and his speech was not gainsaid by any one. The motion prevailed, and Silas made another speech in which he thanked the board for its concessions to the interests of the schools.

Thus sincerity, good sense, forcefulness, scored again where quackery, lack of character and trimming to every wind had failed, after repeated efforts. It is always so. Brave men of honest mien forge ahead; weak, simpering, smirking trimmers trail behind repeating, "You can't do it."

XLII.

During the spring months following the graduation exercises in Muddy Creek township, Silas attended many similar functions in different parts of the county. Everything went along nicely, on time and according to plans. Nearly all of the pupils finishing had made arrangement for a course in some other school. Brush county had never felt such universal sentiment toward higher education. It was estimated that Silas talked to five thousand people at these various meetings. It was truly an era of great progress, educationally, in the county. The oldest citizens had no similar period in mind to compare with it. Professor Littleman had sunk in the estimation of the people to that of a sham and his talk was laughed at even by the children.

So matters had progressed to the middle of June of Silas' second year in office. This was the time when Julia Howe was to return to Cowville from her year's work at Terre Haute in the Normal school. She had been notified by Henry Boggs of the day dinner was to be served in her honor at his home, and he had come in person to Cowville to remind Silas of his promise to bring her out. "Now don't ye fergit, son, t' have Blaze-face ready

bright an' early an' drive carefully over the rough places," was his parting remark.

So Silas wrote the following letter as soon as Mr. Boggs was gone:

DEAR MISS HOWE: You will probably be at home by the time this letter reaches you. I will save my welcoming message and deliver it in person next Sunday morning. I beg to inform you that I am delegated by Mr. Henry Boggs to deliver your person at his house "bright and early" Sunday without fail. I hope you will submit quietly without making a scene. Be so kind as to advise me whether I may have to use force in carrying out Mr. Boggs' orders.

Your friend,

SILAS COBB.

A few days later Silas received the following note:

DEAR MR. COBB: I am in receipt of your note of a few days ago. I can only say that in view of my helpless condition and the overpowering force against me, I shall submit to the conspiracy with as much grace and dignity as possible. You need not bring extra force nor put me in irons. Your friend,

JULIA HOWE.

So Sunday morning Silas walked down to Mrs. Howe's residence, first leaving orders for Blazeface to be brought around a half hour later.

When near the house he saw Julia out in the yard cutting a bouquet of roses for Mrs. Boggs. It had been a long time since he had seen her,

"When near the house he saw Julia out in the yard cutting a bouquet of roses for Mrs. Boggs."

and it seemed to him she had grown taller and more dignified, which greatly enhanced her natural beauty. She was dressed in some sort of dark, shimmering stuff that well became her, and her black hair and rosy complexion harmonized nicely with her gown. Silas felt his heart beat faster as he drew near, and the warm blood stealing into his cheeks. He had reached the gate before she saw him and was leaning over it smiling down upon the scene with great pleasure when she looked up.

"Oh, it is you, is it, Silas? Well, here I am, ready to be overcome and carried to Mr. Boggs. How are you sir, anyway?" And she came forward looking so lovely and happy, Silas almost lost himself in confusion, staring at her.

"Julia, I am awfully glad to see you again and welcome you back to Cowville. How have you been? My, but you are the very picture of health." He was holding both her hands now and smiling down into her face. They made a picture of wholesome, honest young manhood and womanhood that was good to see. After their first greeting was over she thought of their jesting letters.

"Oh, here now! where are your bracelets? I have changed my mind—a woman's right you know—and won't go unless I am forced to. I propose to be delivered to Mr. Boggs in irons."

And she held up two pretty white hands for Silas to put on the manacles.

"All right, Miss, I'll iron you," and he took hold of her hands, bringing them together and holding them tightly in his own. "Will you go now without further trouble?"

"Not till I ask mamma. Unhand me, villain!" and in mock scorn she led the way into the house, Silas following, happy as he could be to see her again.

In a short time they were ready to start and Blaze-face, in all his Sunday "toggery" and dignity, stood hitched to a light buggy at the gate, waiting for them. He looked at Julia as if he wanted to speak to her, and seemed perfectly delighted to feel her soft, white hand on his nose.

"Isn't he lovely, Silas?"

"The proudest and noblest of his kind I ever knew. He has never been struck with a whip, and I really believe if I should strike him he would die of shame. Neither is he afraid of anything. I never knew him to shy at unknown objects along the way. Once we met an Italian with a bear. Blaze-face simply stopped and looked it over thoughtfully, and after a careful examination he decided the bear would not hurt him if it wouldn't hurt a man; besides, he knew he was larger than the bear and——"

"Now, how do you know that, Silas? You

talk as if Blaze-face had taken you into his confidence," said Julia, laughing.

"Well, he almost talks to me. Once he got a little careless and let the buggy run out of the track into a ditch and turned me over, buggy and all. Any other horse would have kicked things to pieces and run away. But not so with him. He stopped perfectly still, with a splintered shaft scratching his side, and looked around at me with the most sorrowful countenance I ever saw, and I really expected to see him shed tears. He was not sorry about the splinter, but sorry because he had been so careless that he dumped me out."

"Why, Silas Cobb, you are just trifling with me, and making that all up."

"Well, now, I'll tell you, Julia; he did all I said he did, but of course I don't know what the dear old fellow thought, and as for the tears, I am not sure about them, either; but he has a face that shows as much expression to me as some people."

By this time everything was ready, and away they went over shady roads, along pretty little valleys, and over hills. It was a perfect June day, and the fields were full of the buzz of bees and the fluttering butterflies. Within an hour they came to Muddy Creek, which name, in fact, was a misnomer at this point, for instead of the water being muddy, it is clear as crystal and babbles over gravel and rocks of many strange for-

mations, containing a partial history of old earth for those discerning enough to read it. They drove into a clear, cool water hole near the ford, where every traveler draws rein in passing to water his horse. The branches of a great elm spread over the clear water, and the English sparrows were holding some sort of a convention in its vast reach of boughs. A few moments later they assaulted a crow that dared to light on a dead tree near by, and after driving it away, came back in a wave, blustering and bragging over their victory, and began a quarrel among themselves.

"It's the human family over and over only on a smaller scale, isn't it, Julia? Look at the little imps bragging about it! How like a mob of boys! I remember when a little boy my father took me to Cowville, and when I ventured from his protection the whole mob of street gamins were right on to me, and I had to thrash a lot of them and break a few heads before I got back to the protecting care of my father's coat-tail."

"I wasn't watching the birds so much as I was those little minnows swimming around Blaze-face's legs. Just look how clear the water is, and how his polished shoes shine in it, and deceive the little fish; see them nibble at them!"

So they sat leaning over the water watching the little fish in its crystal depths; the reflections

of the little birds from the trees overhead; their own reflections dancing on the rippling surface; hearing the lowing of the cattle in the fields; and above all, and better than all, feeling—what only strong and vigorous youth can feel—the keenest enjoyment in each other's companionship.

For a long time they sat there in silence, while Blaze-face enjoyed the cool water on his feet and legs. Now and then he took a glance out of the corner of his eye at the occupants of the buggy, but most of the time he seemed absorbed in his own reflections—horse-dreams, no doubt.

"Julia," said Silas, after a long silence, "I don't believe there are many couples like you and me in this matter of likes and dislikes. Here we find ourselves sitting perfectly contented to be still, and drink in all this bubbling life around us. We do not feel as if we must say something to each other to keep away the yawns. We just enjoy it all whether we talk or not, don't we?"

"I was thinking of that very thing when you spoke, Silas. There are people with whom we can communicate mentally — without words — because we love and understand the same things. You and I seem to have the same love for Nature, so when we contemplate it we need no language—we just feel—know—appreciate it all and—"

"Each other," added Silas.

"Yes, I think we do."

"You only think we do?"

"Well, I know I appreciate you, Silas, but it wouldn't become a young lady to speak for her escort, would it now?"

"In this case it would be all right, because you know how to tell the whole truth; we understand the birds, the fish, the—the—everything out here," and he waved his hand to take in everything in sight, "and, forsooth, we understand each other."

"Yes, I think we do, but you have not said a word about me yet—my work—and how well I have done, or how badly. Now why is this, sir? I have come home to hear you say I have done well, and you say not a word—not even a question is asked, and all this time I have just been burning to tell you. Yet you tell me we understand each other. Oh, blind man! do you think you can ever look into a heart and know all that is there hid away? Not in a thousand years, though you were as wise as—as—

"Solomon," added Silas.

"Yes, sir, as Solomon. You don't know me, Silas Cobb!"

"No, but I like you, though, Julia."

She looked at him, assuming an injured manner, and retorted, "Silas Cobb, you are a trifler."

"No, seriously, Julia, I was not jesting. It did really seem to me that we read each other's

thoughts without need of many words. Now I have not forgotten about your school work, either. I have been listening to your talk, and thinking about it all. You keep me marveling all the time at the wonderful progress you have made since a short two years ago. You come back to us taller by an inch, I know. Whether it is due to actual growth, or whether your dignity and high aims make you look that way, I know not, but it is true, Julia, that I know without your telling me. You have done well; so well that I consider it almost marvelous, yet I want you to tell me of it—everything. I have just been enjoying you so much I have been afraid to hurry through with it lest I learn it all too soon."

"Oh, Silas, do you really mean it all? I don't feel vain over it, but if I could only please you and make you feel that I had really done well, it would seem enough. For it was you who set me right, and you alone I have to thank, and I will never be able to thank you enough."

"You will, Julia——" At this point Blazeface deliberately began to move, apparently having decided things had gone far enough, and climbing up the dusty creek bank, sprinkling it with water, laying the dust nicely, he set off in a long swinging trot toward the Boggs home, some few miles beyond.

"Now what do you think of that for impudence,

Julia? Did you ever see a horse that was any bossier than this same Blaze-face?"

"No, I never did, and you seem to think it cute in him, just like some parents I know of who encourage their children by laughing at their smart ways. Am I not right, sir?"

"You are, my lady! I gracefully submit to the rebuke, for I love that horse overmuch to be a good master, I fear. But to get back to our subject, Julia, I am not going to have you give me any more credit for the success you have made in your work. I saw one of your professors not long ago, and I know you will pardon me for dragging all the information from him I could. I did it in the right spirit, and he didn't tell me anything you would not want me to know."

"What did he say, Silas?"

"He said your work was splendid in every way."

"What else did he say?"

"He said you were a lovely woman."

"Now, sir, you may hush."

"No, honestly, Julia, that's what he said."

"Really and truly?"

"Yes, really and truly."

"And what did you say?"

"I said you were, too."

Then they both laughed heartily, and Blaze-face pricked up his ears and went a little faster.

"Julia, look yonder at that old Bellflower apple-tree in the field. What does it make you think of?"

"Oh, Silas! it is just the same sort of a place, isn't it? Oh that June-time of long ago! It was just such a tree, and just such a fence that we crawled through. Even the clover is there, and it is June-time again, and the bees are humming the same old tune. I can see your face now as it was then—let me see, sir, if it is dirty now as it was that day," and taking his chin in her white, soft fingers she turned his face toward her to examine it, but she didn't find any dirt; instead she saw a pair of longing, black eyes bent on her's, and he felt her fingers tremble.—"No, sir, your face is clean," and she quickly removed her hand while her cheeks flushed red.

"Sixteen years ago this June, Julia, since you got the brier in your toe."

"Yes; isn't it a long time?"

"And you cried about it."

"Yes."

"And I kissed you to get you to hush."

"Ye-es."

"I forget now whether you hushed or not. Do you remember, Julia?"

"Oh I know I must have hushed right away."

They laughed again. It was so easy to laugh. Everything seemed so bright and happy. The

world seemed to be teeming with it. By and by they came out of a bunch of trees on a small hill, and found themselves in sight of the Boggs farm. Lying below them, flooded with sunlight, and covered with waving grain were hundreds of acres of it along Muddy Creek. Standing at the foot of the hills, surrounded by trees, was the Boggs home. There were a dozen out-buildings of various kinds, and back of them stretched a large orchard and from the roadside the June apples showed red from the sun's kisses.

Mr. Boggs was watching for them, and when they drove up to the outside yard gate he was there to greet them and help them out.

"Howdy do, Silas, my boy, and howdy, Miss ——."

"This is Miss Howe, Uncle Henry, added Silas, and she knows you all right. No use wasting formalities getting you old friends together, is there now?"

"Well, I should say not. Mr. Boggs, I am so glad to meet you and grasp your hand, and thank you for your kindness to me." She took his big hands in her's and looked up into his honest old face with a genuine affection, and added rather shyly, "you may kiss me if you want to, Mr. Boggs."

"Well bless my heart, now; will ye jest listen t' the dear gal, Silas?" and he gave her a ring-

ing kiss on each cheek as gallantly as one could wish, holding each of her hands at the same time. Then they all went in, talking and laughing, to meet Mrs. Boggs.

"Marthy, here they air—bless their hearts—I got 'em right under my wings," and without any introduction she took Julia to her heart just as she did Josephine Alger, and then she kissed Silas and wiped her eyes.

Mr. Boggs was full of emotion and spluttered around all over the house, and in the kitchen bothering the girl about the dinner and setting everything in the worst sort of confusion, until Mrs. Boggs led him out, and told Julia to make him stay out.

"Now Mr. Boggs, what can I do in such a case as this?" asked Julia laughing.

"Ye're the boss uv this house, Miss Howe, fer-ever ef ye'll jest stay here. Ef I jest had a boy an' gal like ye an' Silas, it would be mor'n the ole man'd deserve."

"Let's stay, Silas," said Julia, "and just see if Mr. Boggs is joking. It seems to me Mr. Boggs, that you are rather reckless in your wishes. You can never tell how soon they will come true. And then just think of the noise and confusion in the house. The romps, the fights, the breakage, and——and——."

"The lickings," added Silas.

"Yes, the lickings, Silas Cobb, for I am sure you would have to be whipped. You are always helping me to the wrong words. Mr. Boggs, I wish you would send him to the barn."

Mr. Boggs was now sitting in his easy chair, smiling over the scene before him, enjoying himself very much and exchanging good-natured banter with the "boy an' gal," while Mrs. Boggs supervised the preparation of dinner. The table was set on the latticed porch where the refreshing breezes from the wooded hills near by came rustling through the morning-glory vines that had run riot over the lattice work. It was an ideal place for dinner on a summer day. Out through the vines the orchard was visible, and the row of holly-hocks along the fence was in full bloom. Next to the holly-hocks was the long bed of touch-me-nots, tiger lilies, zinnias, bachelor-buttons, etc.; flitting among them the humming-bird was seeking their sweets.

It wasn't long till Silas, Julia and Mr. Boggs were all back in the kitchen, on the porch, everywhere their fancy led them, chatting, laughing, and enjoying everything in sight.

In time dinner was ready and all were seated at the table just as Mrs. Boggs had planned it. Mr. Boggs at one end and Mrs. Boggs at the other, while Julia and Silas faced each other from the sides.

"Face yer pardners," called out Mr. Boggs as they were sitting down. "Marthy, ain't it a wonder how young we air feelin' t'-day? I declare ye seem t' me t' be lookin' nigh as fresh as ye did forty year ago. Silas, jest look at the

"Silas, jest look at the dear old thing."

dear ole thing. Don't ye think she's lookin' younger'n usual, now?"

"Yes sir, it is a fact. I have noticed it Mrs. Boggs, and have been on the eve of mentioning it two or three times."

"Jest listen at them boys, Julia. They are regular blarniers, ain't they?"

"And there's Julia, too, Mr. Boggs; hadn't you noticed how pretty and bright she is look-

ing?" interrupted Silas with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes, and Mr. Boggs, I have been noticing how young and happy you were looking, too," said Julia. "Haven't you noticed it, Mrs. Boggs?"

"Yes, I have, but him an' Silas air poor matches fer you an' me though, Julia."

"Marthy," said Mr. Boggs, and he winked his eye, "who does Julie an' Silas mind ye uv, way back yonder say 'bout fifty years ago, eh, can't ye remember?" Mrs. Boggs remembered, or at least knew that Mr. Boggs referred to their own courting days, and she straightway blushed in spite of her seventy odd years.

"I can't say as I do, Henry," evasively spoke Mrs. Boggs.

"Why, Marthy Boggs! I hope ye ain't fergot our courtin' days, have ye?" Then he looked at Silas, then at Julia to see the effect of his comparison.

"Yes sir," he continued, "they 'mind me very much uv me an' you in them days. Sufferin' Moses! Marthy, them days wus worth livin' wan't they?"

You didn't know, I suppose, Mrs. Boggs, that your worthy husband has told me his love story," said Silas.

"Why, Henry Boggs, air ye crazy, t' tell all

that foolishness t' anybody, let alone a young boy like Silas? Henry, I am amazed!"

Henry Boggs was amused beyond ordinary bounds and he threw up his hands and laughed loudly, Silas and Julia joining him.

"Oh Silas, my boy, she's afeard I've ruined ye ferever. Why Marthy, the boy's older'n I wus in them days an' a heap sight sharper, ain't he Julie?" It was now Julia's turn to blush.

"You are right, Mrs. Boggs; Uncle Henry has ruined me in one way, for if I never experience as sweet a love story as the one he told me you helped him weave, I shall die a disappointed man."

There Mother, what ye got t' say now? Don't ye see the boy is benefited by it an' p'raps—p'raps —"

"Perhaps what, Henry?"

He took a sly look at Julia and Silas and replied: "P'raps Silas needed the experience of an ole man t' guide him."

"Mrs. Boggs, did you notice that hummingbird in the morning-glories there?" asked Julia, hiding a smile behind her napkin. And Uncle Henry tramped Silas' toe and winked at Mrs. Boggs.

"Henry Boggs, I jest know ye air the provokin'est man I ever saw. Julie, don't ye mind him. He's alus teasin' young girls who come here.

But ye jest pay no 'tention t' him. He's childish."

"I like him, though, Mrs. Boggs," replied Julia, coquetting at Mr. Boggs. "He is naughty at times, but he means well. He only wants to tease Silas." This last with a glance at Silas from the corner of her eye.

So the banter ran on for two hours while they disposed of a dinner that was worthy a king's eating.

After dinner was over, they all wandered about the old place, every corner of which was hoary with age, and enjoyed themselves discussing and examining things of interest.

"Silas, ye ain't fergot the June apples, have ye son? I think ye had better take Julie out an' pick a few. Me an' Marthy's too ole t' tramp around with ye, but we want ye t' make yerselves at home 'bout the place, an' have as good a time as ye can while the sun shines."

"All right, Mr. Boggs, we will ransack the orchard for the ripest and best, and bring some of them to you and Mrs. Boggs. Take your afternoon nap while we find them." So laughing and calling back to the old folks, Silas and Julia started for the orchard.

"Silas, I have permission from Mrs. Boggs to pluck any flower that pleases my fancy, and it's this tiger lily. Isn't it gorgeous?"

The flower was plucked and the stem thrust

through her great coil of black hair, contrasting beautifully with its somber background.

"Now Julia, you may sit down there on the grass while I climb this old friendly giant. Many a time have I lost myself in its leafy boughs. This tree is older than we are, and has furnished June apples for a generation to a thankless race. Now do you see those large red ones on that limb? Well, they are the best on the tree. I have learned just where they grow, and—can you catch them? Good! Julia you would have made an athlete with a little training."

"That's enough, Silas; come down now before you fall, and tell me all that has happened to you since I left home."

"Alright, and glad I am to do it. Do you know what I miss more than anything else in the world?"

"No, what is it?"

"Some one to tell things to; things you wouldn't want to tell just any ordinary friend. I really need a companion to whom I can go and tell my troubles—one who would appreciate and feel enough interest in me to want to hear them. Mr. Boggs is the only man I would trust everything with, and he is too old and not enough in touch with my work to understand it all. Haven't you always felt better when you could talk it over with some trusty friend?"

"I have never had any one but my mother to talk heart-things with, and there are some things I never have discussed, because there was not a fit person to tell them to," answered Julia, "and I thoroughly appreciate what you say. So if you will make me your confidant I shall play my part with interest and trustfulness. Say on now, I am ready to take on the whole burden," she finished, smiling.

"Say, we just get along nicely, don't we, Julia? Both got the same——same—— what is it you——."

"Disease," added Julia.

"Yes, that's pretty good. I suppose a name cuts no figure in the matter. But I have a lot of office troubles I'd like to pour into your ears, and see what you think about them. Now no longer than last week a young lady called at my office for the purpose of getting me to endorse her certificate. She came from Superintendent Ed Smith's county and carried one of his certificates. I have great confidence in his papers, and any one coming from him always has immediate recognition from me. So when this lady handed me her certificate, I took a casual glance at it, and told her I should be delighted to endorse anything my friend Smith had set his approval on, for I considered him of the cream of the earth, and so on. Well she was pleased and I was pleased, till I took

a second look at her. Then I said to myself 'she doesn't look right——there is something wrong with the girl's heart—principles—or whatever you have a mind to call it.' I looked a little straighter, right into her eyes, and she flinched a little bit at that and I felt ashamed of myself for my boldness. I took another look at her certificate. I wanted to see if she made a good grade——must be something extra to make up for that other thing she lacked, whatever it was."

"Why what did she look like, Silas? Did she look so horrible, or what?"

"Oh no, she was good-looking in a way, and wore good clothes. Some might say she was attractive, but there was something out of joint, and I couldn't have named it, for I didn't know. I only knew that she had a blemish. So I scanned the certificate more closely, and what think you I saw?"

"Low grades, I suppose."

"Not a bit of it. Her grades were splendid, but the first figure on seven different grade marks had been raised from 20 to 30 per cent. Thus a 7 had been changed to a 9 by simply connecting the point of the 7 with the stem. I looked at them more closely and then glanced at her; she became red in the face, and told me in act and mind as plainly as if she had spoken that she had raised those figures Then I asked her if she had

had the certificate in her possession ever since it was given her.

"'Yes sir,' she said, 'I have, and if you mean to insinuate I have raised those standings you are wrong, for I didn't.'

"'Why Miss——,' I said, 'you jump at conclusions. What have I said about such a thing?'

"'Well,' she replied, 'you act that way.'

"Then I thought I would be justified in asking her a few questions.

"'Then Miss——, be so kind as to tell me who raised these grades?'

"She was indignant.

"'Sir! you insult me. I am a poor girl and cannot afford to resent it, but there are others who will. I know nothing about those grades being raised.'

"'Are these the grades Superintendent Smith issued you?' I asked.

"'Yes sir, they are.'

"'Well, I will have to consult Mr. Smith about it before I can endorse it. You call in to-morrow and I will be able to act on the subject.'

"'You won't endorse my certificate, then? My school begins Monday!'

"'I will answer you after I have heard from Superintendent Smith,' I replied.

"She saw she was in a trap. She knew that he wouldn't verify those grades. She also knew him

well enough to know her certificate would be instantly annulled in his county when he learned the facts. So after a moment's reflection she said:

"'I really think I had better not accept that school, Mr. Cobb. My mother needs me at home, and I will continue to teach under Mr. Smith. I hope you will not trouble about writing him. I will just let the matter drop.'

"'Just as you like,' I replied.

"'Well, I think it will be best,' and she grew very cordial, and bidding me good-bye, she departed.

"Now Julia, that is the first part of it. What ought I to have done as soon as she was gone?"

"You should have written to Superintendent Smith at once, and told him all about it."

"And let Smith annihilate her without compunction?"

"Why shouldn't he? Had she not committed a crime that men are doing time for in penitentiaries? Don't you think it time when a young woman is caught in such a trap to teach her a lesson for life? Is it any less crime to forge a certificate than a note?"

"No, Julia, but would you give the poor girl no show of her life at all; that is, would you cast her down without a chance to repent?"

"Yes, cast her out, and let her come back when

she had repented. That is the best way, Silas. Poor girl! I feel sorry for her, but it takes a great jar to break one loose sometimes from some dangerous habit of thought. Isn't it sad to think she would be so foolish as to do such a dreadful thing as that? What did you really do, Silas?"

"I'll read you my letter to Smith:

My Dear Smith:—I am sorry to report to you that one Miss——handed me her teacher's certificate issued by you, with standings ranging above ninety, showing unmistakable signs of having been raised some thirty per cent on an average. You can verify this, and act as seems best to you. If she were in my county and her work was poor and her heart wrong, I should revoke it. If her heart was right and she lacked a thorough appreciation of the crime she had committed, I might undertake to teach her a lesson that would save her. At any rate I would act in a manner that would have a decided effect, etc., etc.

"Good! Silas, you did just right."

"Do you really think so?"

"Yes, I do. You put it just right. If her heart is good, try to save her; if her heart is wrong, get her out of the teaching force, where none but honest people at least ought to be, no matter what other imperfections they may have."

"That does me a lot of good, Julia. Don't you always feel better when some one tells you you have done well?"

"Don't I know it, Silas? Have I not cried

over the kind and thoughtful encouragement you have always given me, just because it made me so happy? Do you think I have forgotten that Sunday in church after I had told you of my trials? You leaned over and pressed my hand and said, 'You did nobly, Julia.' Your heart was in that statement, and in many a dark, lonely hour since, it has cheered me and made me equal to the test. Oh, I understand it, Silas, and I am so glad I do; and it makes me very happy to have you confide your affairs to me, because it shows you have faith and confidence in me."

"Well, you see I was worried about it for fear I would be the cause of endless trouble to the girl, attaching more importance to her act than it deserved. It is a great responsibility — this assuming to judge the moral acts of others, but you can have little idea of the really sad side of this business without going through it. I want to burden you with one more incident. May I?"

"Shame on you, sir, for even asking me. Am I not your humble slave?"

"No, you are not."

"Why not, my lord?"

"Because one does not tell his troubles to his slave, so be good now and don't dispute my word.

"Well, to begin: about six months ago, a sweet little girl, who lives out in the country north of

Cowville, took the examination. She was just as nice as she could be. She was everything a young maiden should be so far as personality was concerned. She failed to pass. I talked the matter over with her frankly and took a great deal of pains lest I should discourage her efforts; told her to keep studying and going to school, etc. But her parents were set on her teaching, so she was stuffed with a lot of things and tried again, and again, all against my recommendation. The poor little thing would labor and worry all day long and when night came she would hand in her papers wistfully and hopefully. Every time I looked at her I would be tempted to trample *right* under foot and give her a certificate anyhow. So on the last day she came, I marked her papers as fast as she finished them, and when she handed in her last one she sat meekly by my side, waiting for me to finish. She had failed as usual, and I knew it all along. It was the hardest thing of my life to tell her so. I had known her for so long, and had seen her grow up from a mere child of ten—she is now eighteen, but small and young looking for her age. So finally I told her. She looked at me with her sad eyes, and fumbled in her little pocket-book with trembling fingers and took out a five dollar bill and laid it on my knee, and said, 'Mr. Cobb will you please give me a certificate for that?'

You can hardly imagine my surprise and sorrow. The shock was so unexpected, coming from her—a poor, innocent, kind-hearted, lovable child who knew nothing of bribery, that I cried out in anguish, 'My God, Nellie, who told you to do such a thing? Do you want to trample on the heart of a friend who has tried to be kind to you and help you along? Oh, why did you do it, child? Who told you to do such a fearful thing as that?'"

"My outburst was from the heart, because I felt so hurt and disappointed I could not check myself before I had almost broken the girl's heart. She did not understand the force of what she had done. I had been kind to her, and she felt it and appreciated my friendship very much, so when she saw that she had mortally offended me, she burst into tears and became almost hysterical. Between her sobs she told me her father and mother had told her to do it, and said they understood it was customary to pay money to public officials for favors. If she had been a scheming person I would have expected her to make such a proposal, for I am pained to relate that among certain ignorant, foul-minded persons of this county there is a general impression that public officers are corrupt, and can be bought. I pity them with all my heart, Julia, and you cannot imagine the pain and disgust I feel—not toward

this poor girl—but toward those matured, criminally inclined people who have such deformed and detestable notions that an ordinary man of

"She nervously toyed with a large red apple lying in her lap."

honor could be tempted to perjure himself for five dollars. It is too revolting and hateful to think about, and doubly so when I think of that poor

girl who was misled in doing a thing she will abhor to her dying day."

"Silas, I am proud that you are my friend. You are true as life, and I don't wonder that everybody likes you. I am glad to be the most ardent among them all."

"Are you really, Julia?" and he laid his hand on hers as she nervously toyed with a large red apple lying in her lap.

"Indeed I am, Silas. You are my ideal man. I like you very much."

"You are my ideal woman, Julia, and I *love you* very much."

"And I—I—love—you too, sir."

"Oh, Silas, you have spilled the apples! There now—*you bad man*, you have crushed my tiger lily!"

"Isn't that too bad; you looked so pretty with it too."

"Well, we can get another one, Silas, and the apples we can pick up again. Now sir, if you hadn't been in such a hurry, I should have let you kiss me without upsetting everything." Thinking her jest might be taken seriously, she leaned over against his shoulder smiling and said: "But I enjoyed it so much, Silas," and then burst out crying from pure joy.

So this ends the tale, and the end was not the aim of the story either. The getting of a wife is probably the most important step in a man's life, and it has been touched upon here, not for the purpose of telling a love story, but simply because the hero needed a wife, and he, out of the nature of the surroundings, got one. Every day such things happen to men deeply absorbed in trade, and whose lives show little sentiment, yet they take a day off, each in his turn, and take unto themselves wives. It is a part of life, whether it be in the schoolroom or shop; so the author feels justified in mingling this world-wide sentiment into a story told with a purpose. It has put a little bit of the spice of life into a subject that is affected with "dry-rot," and as a result, it is hoped the few lessons taught have reached home.

AFTERWORD.

The story of Silas Cobb closes with scarcely a year and a half of his term of office finished; therefore, much valuable experience in his career has yet to be told. Some day the author hopes to tell what befell him as the years went by, and how he conducted himself under the many trying circumstances that confronted him.

There are yet left among his constituency, the

grand old man, Boggs, the supposed philosopher, Caleb Fisher, Sam Street, and others who did not shirk their duty when duty called for action. In the sequel they play their parts well.

THE END.

COMMENTS ON "SILAS COBB."

WILLIAM HAWLEY SMITH, PEORIA, ILL.

MY DEAR STEPHENS: The MONTHLY reached me O. K. Silas starts out in great shape, and he's already passed the quarter pole at a 2:10 gait. Boggs is a dandy. You've done him to a turn. In fact, you are making a series of snap-shot sketches, a taken-on-the-spot-record that is worth while.

Keep it going, and may the Lord add his blessings. There is room for several missionaries abreast in the field you are working.

W. H. RHODES, HEBRON, NEB.

"Si Cobb" is all right. Any county superintendent would know that the author had "been there" himself.

WM. W. NORTON, PRESIDENT OF SIOUX FALLS COLLEGE, SIOUX FALLS, S. D.

It was through William Hawley Smith that my attention was called to the story, "Silas Cobb." I consider myself fortunate in being able to secure the back numbers at such a late date. I hope this story especially may have a wide circulation among superintendents. It will do them good. Altho' not asked nor needed, I felt I must express my appreciation.

A. H. GLASGOW, EDWARDSVILLE, ALA.

Allow me to thank you for sending me the SUPERINTENDENTS' MONTHLY. It is just what I want. I am anxious to read "Silas Cobb."

LEWIS ELSENSOHN, MT. IDAHO, IDAHO.

GENTLEMEN:—Please send me the December number as I failed to receive the MONTHLY for said month. I am anxious to get it on account of continued story, "Silas Cobb."

J. W. SHIPLEY, HEPNER, ORE.

DEAR SIR:—I am sending you under another cover a copy of *Oregon Teachers' Monthly*. In this copy you will find a paper read by me before the Department of Superintendence of Oregon. An allusion is made in the article to "Silas Cobb." After the article was read, a leading educator rose in the assembly and asked how many were reading "Silas Cobb." To my surprise, I think every hand went up. The last chapter is the best.

Z. B. McCLURE, GRAND JUNCTION, COLO.

I am enjoying "Silas Cobb" very much.

J. T. GIBBS, OKAWVILLE, ILLINOIS.

I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed "Silas Cobb," for there are some things that a cold typewriter cannot express.

M. D. WELTNER, WESTMORELAND, KANSAS.

Your excellent journal has always been eagerly read and has been intensely interesting the past year, because of "Silas Cobb."

STATE SUPT. ALFRED BAYLISS, SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

The story of "Silas Cobb" is a happy hit.

FRANK E. PLUMMER, MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

Your story, "Silas Cobb," is all right. I am going to read it carefully, and write you something about it.

SUPT. MRS. W. P. MYERS, ALVA, OKLA.

I have thought for some time that I would tell you how much I appreciate your story, "Silas Cobb," in the COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS' MONTHLY. It is certainly a very entertaining and helpful story. It is so artistic, so real.

SUPT. GEORGE DREWRY, WALDO, WIS.

"Silas Cobb" alone is worth the price of a year's subscription. Can we not secure it in bound form later? We know it's wholesome for the superintendents; why should it not be good food for the teachers?

SUPT. J. A. TOWNSLEY, MUSCATINE, IOWA.

Have just finished reading the January number of your MONTHLY containing the story of "Silas Cobb." The story is a daisy and true as life.

SUPT. J. L. ROBERTSON, PEORIA, ILL.

Am much interested in "Silas Cobb." It should be printed in book form. I wish I could send it to every director in this county.

SUPT. G. M. MONEY, SHELBYVILLE, KY.

I like the paper very much, especially the "Silas Cobb" of it.

SUPT. EDWARD L. PARMENTER, IRON MOUNTAIN, MICH.

Everything else has to wait when the MONTHLY is laid on my desk, until the part devoted to Silas and his fortunes is absorbed.

SUPT. W. N. STEVENSON, PIERCE, NEB.

I have received a number of very practical and timely suggestions through "Silas Cobb." Mr. Stephens is to be congratulated.

A. J. Hesnard, Hermosa, S. D.

Gentlemen:--Allow me to thank you for sending me the Superintendents' Monthly so regularly. The Monthly is surely a hit—"Silas Cobb" is just what we needed and should be in the hands of every teacher and district officer as well.

Ella A. Everett, Tribune, Kas.

I have been very much interested in the story of "Silas Cobb" and have gotten many useful hints from it.

Lucy Howard, Belleville, Kas.

I always read the adventures of "Silas Cobb" and must confess them very natural so far as my experience goes.

W. Griffith, Wilmot, Wis.

A real live county superintendent must have written "Silas Cobb." It is not a creation but an experience. The characters are real, are of flesh and blood and exist in every county belonging to Uncle Sam's big estate.

J. H. Grover, Frankfort, Ind.

"Silas Cobb" has taught me many valuable lessons in courtesy, self-reliance and stick-to-it-iveness and has doubled the strength of my backbone.

W. T. Dick, Keosaqua, Ia.

Have been very much interested and pleased with "Silas Cobb." The story contains most excellent thoughts and suggestions, both for the county superintendents and teachers.

A. E. Winship, Editor Journal Education, Boston, Mass.

My Dear Mr. Stephens: –I read the chapters of "Silas Cobb" so far published, and have enjoyed the story. It is a good portrayal of the extremes of human nature among school men, each typical class that we all know.